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## **A study of the factors which aid the teacher in successful grouping of children for the purpose of reading instruction.**

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A STUDY OF THE FACTORS  
WHICH AID THE TEACHER IN  
SUCCESSFUL GROUPING OF CHILDREN  
FOR THE PURPOSE OF READING INSTRUCTION

## HEMMERT - 1955

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A STUDY OF THE FACTORS  
WHICH AID THE TEACHER IN SUCCESSFUL  
GROUPING OF CHILDREN FOR THE PURPOSE OF READING INSTRUCTION

By

Marilyn A. Hemmert

A problem presented in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
Master of Science Degree

University of Massachusetts

1955

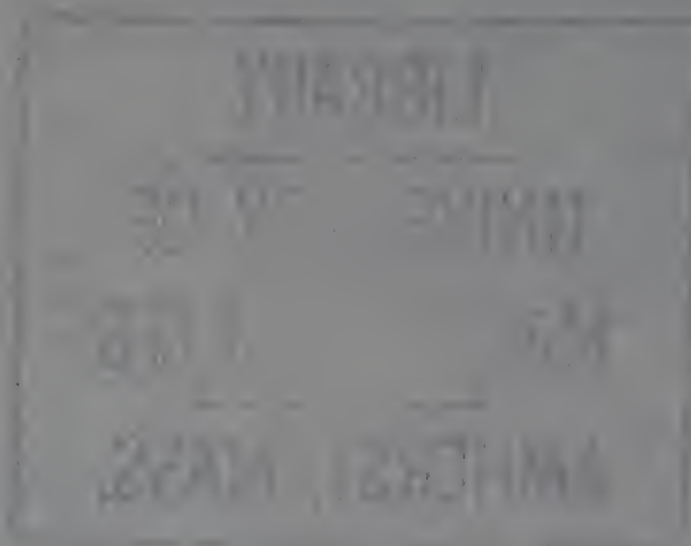


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CHAPTER I  
THE INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER I

### THE INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem -- A study of factors which aid a teacher in successful grouping of children for the purpose of reading instruction.

Purpose of the Problem -- Teachers truly want to do a better job of teaching children to read. They attend courses and meetings; read professional books, but sometimes return to the classroom with the question, "Exactly how can I do it in my classroom?" They are confronted with children that are all individuals. They are confronted by parents who do not understand modern methods.

The recent findings of research, told in the language of classroom teachers, will try to be interpreted for the teachers. This paper will try to help the teacher apply the theory she has learned in the classroom. The problems she meets in the reading groups will be considered and suggestions for solving or lessening the problems will be made.

The major emphasis will be on the effort of the teacher to provide for the individual differences she meets in her classroom. Miles A. Tinker states that the organization of instruction to provide adjustment to the individual differences in her class is in many respects the major problem of the elementary school teacher.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Tinker, Miles A. Teaching Elementary Reading. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952. p. 194



The teacher can neither eliminate these differences nor bring all children up to a given standard of performance. This problem will try to help the teacher face the problem of individual differences realistically by recognizing the situation and by helping her to adjust her teaching accordingly.

One of the most popular attempts to provide for individual differences in reading ability associated with regular promotions and related factors is the sub-grouping of children within a class. Grouping is now commonplace in elementary schools but is sometimes opposed by teachers of upper-elementary and high school classes. Moreover, at all levels, both teachers and supervisors are critical of the results of formal rigid grouping. The use of sub-grouping within a class must, therefore, be considered as a controversial issue.<sup>2</sup>

Nature of the Study -- The contents and organization of the problem were determined by findings of questionnaires submitted to teachers throughout Massachusetts. Trial questionnaires were sent out at first. From these questionnaires were determined questions that would indicate facts and suggestions for helping the teachers use reading groups successfully.

Experienced classroom teachers, elementary supervisors, and reading authorities were consulted in making out the final questionnaire and determining the principles and pro-

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<sup>2</sup>Russell, David H. and Wulfing, Gretchen. "Eight Controversial Issues in the Teaching of Reading." Ginn and Company Contributions in Reading, No. 7, Boston: Ginn and Co. pp 1-8



cedures to be included in this study.

The study is organized around the major concerns and factors in grouping as expressed in the questionnaires. These include: first, a consideration of the evolution of the grouping program with special attention to how our present day methods developed; second, an evaluation of approved methods for determining tentative grouping within a classroom; third, a consideration of the methods of putting grouping theories into practice successfully; and fourth, consideration of special problems which confront the teachers in putting these principles of grouping into practice.

CHAPTER II

OUTLINE OF PROCEDURE

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## CHAPTER II

### OUTLINE OF PROCEDURE

Specific Purposes of the Study -- The major two purposes and emphasis of the study have been stated in the preceding chapter. The more specific purposes of the problem are stated below:

1. To examine and evaluate the methods of tentative grouping of children.
2. To help the teacher decide the size and number of groups suitable for her class.
3. To consider the means and reasons for keeping groups flexible.
4. To consider the methods used to give the children more individual attention.
5. To help the teacher provide for individual differences.
6. To help the teacher to accomplish intelligent public relations.
7. To give suggestions for correlation of grouping with other subject matter.
8. To give suggestions to the teacher in using grouping in an intelligent and practical manner
9. To help the teacher understand and meet the difficulties encountered in grouping.
10. To help the teacher understand the strengths and reasons for grouping and to employ the best means in taking advantage of them.

Techniques of Obtaining Information -- The following procedure has been used to gather and correlate all the available data:

1. A trial questionnaire was constructed through advice of teachers, supervisors, and reading authorities. Twenty teachers filled out the trial questionnaire.



2. From this trial questionnaire, a checklist questionnaire was sent to 165 public school primary teachers in Massachusetts. The population of the towns participating varied from 3,430 to 66,109 people. A letter was enclosed with the questionnaires and sent to the superintendents of these schools. Stamped addressed envelopes were included. A copy of the letter of transmittal is included in Appendix I.
3. A sample questionnaire appears in Appendix II. Most of the questionnaires were returned promptly. While awaiting final returns, other research was carried out. Of the final 118 returned questionnaires, 102 were used in the results and 16 were not used because of difficulty of interpretation. 71.5% of questionnaires were returned.\*
4. The interpretation of the results was made. Tables were developed showing the tabulations. Notes were made of any suggestions, "write-in" answers, or significant comments.
5. Research in books and periodicals, conferences with teachers, administrators, reading authorities were used for the methods and reasons of grouping commented upon in this study.
6. A sociogram concerning reading, arithmetic, and play was made in two second grade public school classes of 26 pupils. The classes were compared as were the individual choices on the sociogram. Results were put into tables for easier interpretation.
7. From this material conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further study were made.

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\* 52 questionnaires were not returned



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CHAPTER III

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

### CHAPTER III

#### THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Early Grouping -- About 1920, the belief that grouping in reading instruction was necessary to provide for individual differences began to be accepted by educators. They felt that dividing the pupils into homogeneous groups was the answer. At first standardized intelligence tests were employed as the basis for this grouping. These tests required that the pupil read the questions; therefore, the best readers were put into the "bright group" and the other children fell into the categories: "average group" and "slow group".

At first the only differentiation was in speed. The "bright group" might be reading on page 173; the "average group", on page 100; and the "slow group", on page 37. They were all expected to cover the same material, but at different rates. This made it difficult to be changed from one group to another. Some children often spent their grade school years with the same group that they had been identified with in the earliest grades.

Parents began to object to the program. Although teachers tried to cover up the "bright", "average", and "slow" label with new names --- flowers, birds, etc., parents and pupils were not fooled. This program created other problems in social living and reading.

Development in Late Twenties -- Research studies during the late twenties and early thirties showed that the children had needs that were different. Soon, the standardized intelli-



gence tests were supplemented by interests, reading achievement, physical and emotional differences. Teacher's manuals began to advocate that the children should progress at their own rates. In fact, not all children had to cover the same material during the school year. For example; a child in the slow group in second grade might be reading from a first reader. The keynote of grouping was still differentiation by rate of reading.

Modern Grouping Development -- During the forties, teachers became aware of children's differences in readiness, abilities, attitudes, and interests. Groups became more flexible. Groups were organized according to interest groups, grouping according to reading achievement, and grouping through the use of small groups helped by group leaders.

The problem of bringing the pupil up to "grade level" was important then and is still one which the teachers of today are concerned. There has been a shift, however, to the problem of "in what ways reading can help to develop the child".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hester, Kathleen, Teaching Every Child to Read. New York: Harper Brothers, 1955. p. 96.

CHAPTER IV

TENTATIVE GROUPING OF PUPILS



CHAPTER IV

TEANTATIVE GROUPING OF PUPILS

Experience Background -- The experience backgrounds of children play an important part in the beginning reading program. At one desk may be Jimmy, whose parents have taken him to the seashore, circus, farm; who owns a bicycle, roller skates, phonograph, a pet dog; and who lives in a house in a neighborhood of gardens and trees. Jane, at the other desk may live in an apartment house; whose parents have never taken her to the circus or farm. Experience background in learning to read is important. Jimmy will probably have more ideas to talk about, to write about, to read, and to interpret pictures. Most of the pre-primer stories require a knowledge of bicycles, the farm, the milkman, policeman, fireman, and postman. These stories revolve around the suburban family life.

Pre-reading experiences need to be an integral part of a total primary program planned to develop a rich and varied background of experiences. In one sense, they represent the verbal side of this program -- the planning sessions, the sharing periods, the recording of what was seen on a trip, the experience of interpreting pictures, and the labelling of classroom exhibits. These are the contacts with words that meet pre-reading needs in settings where the importance of being able to read is kept to the fore.

Before a teacher can group the children in reading groups, it would be wise for her to "sound out" the experience background



of the children. In a small community, the teacher may be aware of the child's experience background but this is not often the common case. Many of the manuals realize this problem and provide for explanations in the introductions to the stories. For example; "an elevator" may mean one thing to a country child and another to a city child.<sup>1</sup>

Miles A. Tinker says, "Children with limited experience in group cooperation must learn to work together."<sup>2</sup> This brings up the point that a limited experience background cannot only retard reading but retard the working of an efficient group.

As pointed out by the Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English, "Groups of children talk informally as they engage in some common activity in the classroom or on the playground. They share with their friends the interesting experiences they have had over the weekend. Spontaneous talking of this sort develops the bonds of shared interests. From such use of language comes much of the child's pre-school growth in speech."<sup>3</sup>

Before the formal instruction in reading begins there should be a program that allows the children to share experiences.

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<sup>1</sup>McKim, Margaret G., Guiding Growth in Reading. New York: The MacMillan Co. 1955. p. 463.

<sup>2</sup>Tinker, Miles A., Teaching Elementary Reading. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 1952. p. 325.

<sup>3</sup>Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English. Language Arts for Today's Children. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 1954. p. 246.



By carefully guiding this program the teacher may sound out their common knowledge of the family, pets, suburban life, and the community helper. The children with rich experience backgrounds can be of great help to the teacher if they share their experiences in a friendly, interesting, and cooperative manner. Audio-visual aids and field trips can help to liven the limited backgrounds. Reading will be more meaningful when there is a common experience background.

Intelligence Tests -- Estimates of intellectual ability are likely to be more reliable if they are secured on the basis of an individual test, such as the Revised Stanford-Binet Scale.<sup>4</sup> The young child particularly, is not always adept in following group directions. A qualified examiner working with a child alone is likely to catch such difficulties. However, such individual tests require training on the part of those who give them. Teachers usually do not have such training and systems rarely can afford the services of enough qualified psychologists to test every first-grade child.

Because of the practical difficulty of securing individual test scores for more than a limited number of first grades, primary group intelligence tests are frequently used.

In deciding on a specific test, school personnel need to take into account many of the same factors that are important

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<sup>4</sup> Verman, Lewis M. and Merrill, Maude E., Measuring Intelligence. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co. 1937. p. 116.



in choosing a readiness test. If the test is to be given early in the first grade, care needs to be taken to select one in which the directions are as simple as possible and the method of indicating answers requires little dexterity in handling a crayon or pencil. Typically the test for the young child is untimed, or has a very generous time limit. Teachers are often urged by test authors to take groups of not more than ten children at one time, and to enlist the aid of a helper if possible. Care must be taken to make sure that children are not copying each other's work, that they are following directions properly, and that they are working on the correct page or exercise.

Even when a test has been carefully given, judgments about the intellectual abilities of first-graders should be very tentative. In a group test, some children may be handicapped by inexperience in following directions, handling pencil and paper, and turning pages. There is also evidence that raises questions regarding the adequacy of existing intelligence tests as measures of the potential ability of the child from an under-privileged family. Because of the difficulty of securing accurate test scores for young children, some school systems prefer to postpone giving intelligence tests until the second grade. When this is done, teachers rely for the first year on evidence from reading-readiness tests and from classroom situations



in which a child's ability can be roughly appraised. A score on a reading-readiness test can also be used as a check on an intelligence test score.

Margaret G. McKim suggests situations in which to appraise the children.<sup>6</sup>

1. Vocabulary
2. Picture interpretation
3. Child's capacity for sustained attention
4. Child's reasoning on problems
5. Child's ability to follow directions

Intelligence tests can be used as only one indication of a child's ability. They have an important place when given and interpreted properly but can be made more effective if supplimented with scientific teacher observation.

Anecdotal Records -- Important evidence can be collected by means of anecdotal records. An anecdotal record is a brief description of a significant part of a child's behavior pattern. These notes should be dated and made regularly so that a pattern can be seen. A brief summary can be made on the progress of a child from time to time. Anecdotal records can be a help in the emotional and social areas. A child's growth in words, stories and pictures can also be noted.

In order to simplify collecting these records, a teacher may collect one type of information at a time. Signs of pro-

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<sup>6</sup> McKim, M. op. cit. p. 286



gress and difficulty as noted on these records help a teacher with planning. Interviews with parents are made on a more objective basis with these aids.

A teacher should not try to record every action or event in the class. Such anecdotal records would result in a confused series of notes and would take most of a teacher's precious day.

There is little doubt that anecdotal records, made in a scientific practical manner can be a help in pre-grouping the children.

Some of the areas that a teacher may note are:

1. Social Attitude
2. Experience Background
3. Speech Difficulties
4. Emotional Status
5. Extent of Vocabulary
6. Audio and Visual Difficulties
7. Direction Following
8. Interpretation of Pictures
9. Attention Span
10. Special Interests
11. Coordination

Physical Status -- Teachers cannot think of the physical and the mental factors of a child as independent from each other. The child functions as a whole. His physical state will have a direct bearing on his learning activities in



reading. Inability to see clearly or hear distinctly, physical fatigue and listlessness are a few of the physical disabilities that influence satisfactory progress. It would be an excellent practice if all schools required a physical examination before entering school. Often times, the teacher will have to be on the alert for signs of disabilities, especially in the following fields:

1. Vision
2. Hearing
3. Speech

Adjusting Instruction to Physical Status -- Gates and Bond have emphasized that in cases where a physical disability cannot be helped by medical procedure that it is not desirable to delay beginning reading. The important thing is to recognize the deficiencies and then to adjust the reading instruction accordingly.<sup>7</sup>

Hearing -- The ability to hear is an important factor in readiness for reading. Many children have hearing losses that interfere with learning. Again it would be recommended that a school system include a hearing test such as an audiometer test. The teacher should be on the lookout for signs of hearing loss. Inattentiveness and failure to follow oral instructions should be investigated. Immediate care should be recommended for earache and ear infections.

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<sup>7</sup>Gates, and Bond, G. L. Reading Readiness, Teachers College Record. Number 37. 1936. pp. 679-685.



Speech and Hearing Deficiencies -- Speech is closely related to hearing. If the child has difficulty hearing, his speech may be impeded or retarded. Since beginning reading depends on beginning sounds, reading may be affected. It is important that a teacher place a child in a group where he can hear easily and where he can receive the individual attention that he needs. The following list of signs to observe will help a teacher in discovering audio and speech difficulties:

1. Does he hear vowel sounds?
2. Does he hear consonant sounds?
3. Does he follow directions?
4. Is he attentive?
5. Does he speak clearly?
6. Does he speak in a pleasant voice?
7. Does he speak without stuttering or lisping?

Auditory Discrimination -- Auditory discrimination is the ability to hear likenesses and differences in sounds. This is a skill that has to be learned. Hearing acuity is a physical factor. Some children come to school with auditory discrimination well developed, while others come to school with fairly little development in hearing discrimination. Experience background plays an important role in this factor.

Physical hearing disability is a cause of poor sound discrimination. If a child cannot hear the sounds clearly, he cannot be expected to differentiate among them.<sup>8</sup>

8

Hester, Kathleen B. Teaching Every Child to Read. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1955. p. 52.



Vision -- The distinguishing between objects is called visual discrimination. To do well in reading, the child must have sufficient power to distinguish between the forms of printed words.

The child comes to school with some training in visual discrimination. This must be developed so that he can discriminate between very small differences. If a child cannot see details clearly, he is not ready for reading.

There are many visual defects such as astigmatism, near-sightedness and cross-eyedness. Some are easily detected and some are not. Any eyestrain or eye-rubbing should be watched carefully. Difficulties could be found through an efficient eye testing program. Classroom observation can play a part in screening visual difficulties. Where eye difficulties cannot be medically or mechanically overcome, the teaching must be individualized for the child. The emphasis in the reading group should be auditory rather than visual.<sup>9</sup>

In forming groups it is important to distinguish between the children that have well developed visual discriminatory powers and those that haven't this power well developed. Grouping should be done accordingly.

Emotional Status -- Some children may be emotionally immature. They may be timid, shy, uncooperative, self-centered, easily upset emotionally and anti-social.

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<sup>9</sup> Tinker, M. A. op. cit. p. 30



According to Harris there are three varying aspects of personal and social adjustment.<sup>10</sup>

1. Emotional Stability provides an essential foundation for attaining the personal and social adjustment needed to learn to read. The emotionally immature child is easily upset, crying with little provocation. His moods change rapidly and he is subject to temper tantrums.
2. Self-reliance is another sign of personal and social adjustment. The degree to which the child desires and is willing to take the initiative and direct his own activities is a sign of good adjustment.
3. The Ability to Participate in Cooperative Enterprises refers more to social adjustment. It is of course, somewhat dependent upon the personal adjustment of the child. The child who is well adjusted socially participates in a large number of group enterprises both outside and in school. This social adjustment which fosters smooth participation in social situations is especially important where teaching is done in groups.

If the child indicates emotional and social immaturity he will create a special and individualized problem in the classroom. It will be difficult for him to participate successfully in the group activities.

Emotional behavior cannot be easily tested as can the child's hearing and vision. Teacher observation is important. She must not only regard the child who exhibits aggressive behavior, but the shy and reluctant child. So often, the quiet child is overlooked beside the noisy or the trouble-maker. Both maladjustments may result in a negative view



toward reading. The teacher must be patient and understanding as she guides the children. Grouping these emotional problem children should be a careful, slow process. The small group program can be worked so that the shy child feels he belongs and the aggressive child is put into a group where he can learn to be cooperative and learn to get along with the other children. Responsibility for a definite part of a group task when working with a small group tends to develop confidence in the timid child.

According to Monroe, personal and social adjustment is improved by effective participation which requires cooperation<sup>11</sup> in group and play activities.

Previous Records -- The results of formal tests should not be used without consideration for other factors. The systematic observations of the classroom teacher is important in determining the place of a child in a group. She must be able to appraise the child and evaluate the child's emotions, mentality and sociability.

It is a good idea for a teacher to make a record of each child. This can be in the form of an informal inventory or of summarized anecdotal records. These can be put into a child's folder where a teacher can determine at a glance the status of each child. It is necessary for a teacher to pass this on to the next teacher. Each year a teacher may make additional

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11

Monroe, Marion, Growing Into Reading. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co. 1951. p. 224.



comments on the child. The following can be used as suggested factors to note:

1. Physical Status
2. Hearing
3. Vision
4. Mentality
5. Speech
6. Social Status
7. Emotional Status
8. General Abilities
9. Coordination
10. Following Directions

Two records that are recommended by G. A. Yoakam are:

12

Reading Record Cards -- The reading lists the characteristics and abilities to be developed for a specific reading level. It indicates the reading skills that should receive attention. If the card is used correctly, a complete profile of each child's development will be depicted. The needs of each pupil will be made obvious.

Pupil Evaluation Record -- To see, analyze and correct our own errors is one of the most effective ways of learning. After a story has been read and the pupils correct their exercises, they note the skills with which they have difficulty. Each pupil then enters his record on a card kept for that purpose.

The Pupil Evaluation Record would probably not apply to the primary grades, but the Reading Record Cards could be used with success if kept and interpreted with care. The

12

Yoakam, G. A. et al. A Teacher's Manual for Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Grade Reading. Laidlow Basic Readers. Chicago: Laidlow Brothers. 1949. pp. 12-13.



Reading Record Card deals with the following plus various  
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subtitles:

1. To increase vocabulary by learning the meanings and pronounciations of new words.
2. To understand what is read.
3. To organize and remember what is read.
4. To locate information effectively.
5. To evaluate critically what is read.
6. To read aloud in a voice pleasant in quality and with expression.

A teacher should not depend entirely upon memory for appraising the strengths and weaknesses of the children in her class. For this reason she should keep records, preferably of two kinds: anecdotal and cumulative. There is little to be gained by collecting in a cumulative record folder, test scores and observed behavior, unless these data are used in appraisals.

Standard and Reading Achievement Tests -- In some school systems, children's scores on standardized reading tests are used as one basis for appraisal and grouping. Their value lies in the fact that they provide, through their norms, evidence regarding the typical performance of large numbers of children who have worked under standardized conditions with  
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the materials which comprise the test.

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13

Ibid. p. 13.

14

McKim, M. Op. Cit. p. 461.



A test score is just an objective measure which the teacher can place her more subjective judgments. The standardized reading test should be used to help guide classroom activities and specifically group formation. The chief problem is to choose a suitable array of criteria for securing a well-rounded picture of results.

Standardized tests should be selected with the local curriculum in mind. It is imperative that teachers and others, who are thoroughly familiar with the objectives and contents of the local curriculum, should assist in selecting tests for use in their schools.<sup>15</sup>

McKee gives a list of standardized tests which are particularly useful with first grade pupils when given during the last few months of that grade.<sup>16</sup>

1. Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty. World Book Co., Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York. Tests word analysis, phonetics, oral and silent reading pronunciation.
2. Garrey Primary Reading Test. Southern California School Book Depository, Los Angeles. Tests recognition of word forms, phrases, vocabulary, comprehension of details.
3. Gates Primary Reading Test. Teachers College Bureau of Publications, Columbia Univ., New York. Tests word recognition, sentence meaning, paragraph meaning.

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<sup>15</sup>

The Commission in the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English. Language Arts for Today's Children. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 1954. p. 407

<sup>16</sup>

McKee, Paul. The Teaching of Reading in the Elementary School. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co. 1948. pp. 275-276.



4. Gray's Oral Reading Paragraphs. Public School Publishing Company, Bloomington, Ill. Tests accuracy and rate of oral reading.
5. Gray's New Oral Reading Check Tests. Public School Publishing Co., Bloomington, Ill. Tests accuracy and rate of oral reading.
6. Hill Test of Word Meanings. Public School Publishing Co., Bloomington, Ill. Tests knowledge of meanings of words.
7. Sangren-Wilson Instructional Test in Reading. Public School Publishing Co., Bloomington, Ill. Tests word and phrase recognition, word meanings, association of sentences with illustrations, sentence meaning, following directions, getting general significance, etc.
8. Manwiler Word Recognition Test. Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York. Tests recognition of words.
9. Metropolitan Achievement Test. World Book Co., Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York. Tests word meaning, word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension.
10. Pressey First Grade Word Reading Test. Public School Publishing Co., Bloomington, Ill. Tests recognition of initial sounds in words, word recognitions, and word meaning.
11. Reilley's Primary Reading Test. Houghton-Mifflin Co., Boston, Mass. Tests word recognition, word meaning, sentence meaning, paragraph meaning.
12. Progressive Reading Tests. Southern Calif. Book Depository, Los Angeles. Tests word recognition, following directions, comprehension.
13. Unit Scales of Attainment in Reading. Test Bureau, Minneapolis, Minn. Tests vocabulary and comprehension.

Interest -- Throughout the period of growth, a child's interests are closely related to his abilities. As time passes, the channels through which he chooses to exercise



his abilities are influenced to an increasing degree by opportunities that happen to come his way and by the conditioning effects of past experience. Generally speaking, the younger the child is, the more will things he chooses to do give an indication of what he can do or can learn to like to do. (There are exceptions to this of course.)<sup>17</sup>

In a study done by A. T. Jersild and R. Tasch, there was relatively little overlap between the things children reported they were occupied with at school and the things that occupied them most outside of school. In fact, many children, as they move through the school grades show a decline in interest in what the school offers by way of its academic program.<sup>18</sup>

The beginnings of reading interests appear in the young child's manipulation of books and pictures, his interest in looking at and identifying pictures, and his desire for being read to. Many children are interested in being "read to" even before they can understand the words -- apparently the flow of sound and the changes in facial expression and vocal inflection attract their attention. Reading interests emerge out of experiences that go back to early infancy.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>

Jersild, Arthur T. Child Psychology. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954. p. 500.

<sup>18</sup>

Jersild, Arthur T. and Tasch, R. Children's Interests. New York: Teachers College, Columbia Univ. 1949. p. 328.

<sup>19</sup>

Almy, M. C. Children's Experiences Prior to First Grade and Success in Beginning Reading. Contributions to Education, No. 954. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949. p. 444.



In the classroom, the teacher should present a variety of interests for the children to choose. The more interests a child has to taste or acquire, the more chance he will have to hit upon some interests that are suited to his particular gifts. By developing interests that are in keeping with his particular abilities, a child is helped to realize himself; and through this process he probably also can be helped to acquire a wholesome idea of his own worth.

Jersild believes that failure to acquire interests in childhood may have lifelong gaps. Along with this, there are many indications that the range of children's interests is quite restricted compared with the interests children might, with help, acquire.<sup>20</sup>

The child may bring interests to the reading situation and the teacher in her guidance develops interests. Grouping affords a means through which these interests may be developed. It provides an opportunity for the teacher to group her children, not only according to ability, but according to interests. These interests help in motivating the child to read. It is important for the teacher to provide material that not only is on the interest level of the child but on the reading level of the child. In this manner, grouping may become more flexible and less likely to carry a "label" for the child.



A teacher in the primary grades cannot expect the children to fill out a formal Interest Inventory but she may, by using anecdotal records and determining the experience background of the child, be able to guide him in his development. She should note the continual growth in the amount of reading the child does, as well as the increase in the variety of types of material and the purposes for which she or he reads.

Informal Reading Periods -- One means of determining the pre-grouping of a class is through informal reading or performance tests. This is more successful when the child has had at least one year of reading instruction, i.e. in second and third grades. The teacher should pick out some selections to be read that are below the grade level and other selections that increase to at least one grade level above. The type and number of errors should be noted. Manner of reading, attention and other factors previously mentioned should also be noted.

The groups should be kept small so that the teacher may give more individual attention. The children should not realize they are being analyzed but should be kept in a relaxed, informal atmosphere.

The informal reading periods should be repeated enough to warrant a useful and sincere objective judgment of the child. It is important for a teacher not to regard these judgments as final or rigid, but to change when her judgments prove faulty or impractical.



Such close day-by-day observation can give the teacher an intimate understanding of the child's needs and difficulties which no test or series of tests alone can give. This is particularly true if, aware of the unreliability of her judgment and memory, the teacher tries to make her observations as unprejudiced and objective as possible, keeps and observations with the use of standardized and informal tests.

Commercial Reading Tests -- Most standardized reading tests are designed to measure several factors which are requisite for success in reading. It differs from an intelligence test, which measures mental ability alone.

Kathleen B. Hester lists the following reading tests  
21  
as widely used:

1. Gates Reading Readiness Tests, by A. I. Gates, Bureau of Publications Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, rev. ed. 1942.
2. The American School Readiness Test, by Young, Pratt and Whitmer, Public School Publishing Company, Bloomington, Ill. 1941.
3. Metropolitan Readiness Tests, by G. H. Hildreth and W. L. Griffiths, World Book Company, Yonkers, 1933.
4. Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test, by J. Murray Lee and W. W. Clark, California Test Bureau, Los Angeles, rev. ed., 1943.
5. Monroe Reading Aptitude Tests, by Marion Monroe, Houghton-Mifflin Co., Boston, 1935.



5. Van Wageningen Reading Test, by M. J. Van Wageningen, Educational Test Bureau Inc., Minneapolis, Minn., 1932.

A well organized testing program is an essential part of reading instruction. Careful consideration should be given to the selection of these tests. Some factors as suggested by Tinker are listed below:

1. Aspects of reading measured by a test.
2. Grade range in reading ability covered by a test to insure its appropriateness for the range of abilities in a given grade.
3. Cost
4. Testing time.
5. Availability of norms.

Commercial reading tests should not be used as the only means of analyzing a child's reading. A teacher must use this aid in cooperation with the other aids before mentioned. The tests are only as good as the test administrator, interpretation of the results and of course, the test itself. Many factors may influence the results of the tests, such as emotional and physical conditions of the children when they take the tests.

Cost is one reason that some schools are unable or unwilling to use commercial reading tests. Another reason may be the concern that there will not be careful administration and interpretation of the tests. In some instances, the teachers may interpret the results of the tests too rigidly.



It is important that this aid in helping to group the children is supplemented with the teachers understanding of the child's needs and difficulties.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATION OF TENTATIVE GROUPING DATA



CHAPTER V

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TENTATIVE GROUPING DATA

The Checklist Questionnaire Returns -- From the 102 teachers and supervisors who contributed to this study, there is an indication that at least one aid is used by each teacher for the purpose of grouping the children tentatively for reading instruction.

As has been stated in the previous chapter, careful pre-grouping or tentative grouping should be carried out by the teacher and administration. The more aids the teacher has at her disposal the better will be the results. Of course, these aids must be administered carefully, interpreted carefully and applied carefully. It is not possible for most teachers to use every aid that was suggested in the previous chapter. Some of the reasons that more aids are not used by teachers are listed below:

1. Cost of materials.
2. Lack of training in administering the aids.
3. Lack of time.
4. Unavailability of material or information.
5. Lack of understanding of the needs for tentative grouping aids on the part of teachers and administrators.

It would be better for a teacher to use a few of the most important aids than to use too many with only confused results. Lack of time seems to be the "cross" teachers bear. Sufficient



and efficient organization of time should be made for tentative grouping.

If some of the aids are not made available to a teacher because of lack of money, informal teacher made tests may be made with excellent results. In fact, the tests may be more suited to the community and the individual children than commercial type tests.<sup>1</sup> Evidence is also available to show that amateurs may at times do even worse with the new type tests than with traditional examinations.<sup>2</sup> Both logical considerations and statistical analyses indicate that skillfully prepared informal tests are as reliable and as valid as available standardized tests.

In constructing informal teacher-made tests there are four headings which indicate roughly the steps or stages in the process:

1. Planning the test.
2. Preparing the test.
3. Trying out the test.
4. Evaluating the test.

Lack of understanding of the needs for tentative grouping aids on the part of teachers and administrators, probably, figures in a small part of the percentage for not using more.

<sup>1</sup>

Ross, C. C. Measurement in Today's Schools. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1947. p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>

Crawford, C. C. and Rynaldo, D. A. "Some Experimental Comparisons of True-False Tests and Traditional Examinations", School Review. 33 (Nov. 1925) pp. 698-706.



Consensus of 102 Primary Teachers and Supervisors -- In order to organize the results, the returns are shown in percentage in TABLE I.

TABLE I

SUMMARY OF THE TENTATIVE GROUPING AIDS  
THAT WERE USED BY THE TEACHERS FOR THE  
PURPOSE OF READING INSTRUCTION

AIDS USED FOR TENTATIVE GROUPING	Number of Times Checked	Percent
Informal Reading Periods	76	20.5
Previous Records	70	19.0
Intelligence Test	50	13.5
Experience Background	43	11.5
Emotional Status	36	9.5
Standard Achievement Test	35	9.5
Commercial Reading Test	25	7.0
Anecdotal Records	18	5.0
Physical Status	13	3.5
Interest Questionnaire	4	1.0



From TABLE I the following conclusions can be drawn: Every aid was picked as being used in the Massachusetts Public School System. The Interest Questionnaire was chosen only 1% of the time. The reason for this may be that most Interest Questionnaires are planned for children above the primary level. Undoubtedly, there is a need for a primary grade level Interest Questionnaire. This should not stand in the way of a teacher when she wishes to find the interests of the child. She may make up her own informal interest questionnaire and use it to advantage. At the primary level, the teacher would be more successful if she used oral questions. In her every day activities with the children, many pertinent facts may also come out.

Physical status was chosen only 3.5% of the time. This is surprising, since physical status plays such an important part in the reading progress of the child. Hearing and vision are definitely related to reading. Some of the reasons that physical status played such an unimportant part may be among the following:

1. Unavailability of physical or health records.
2. Lack of special testing equipment.
3. Poor observational techniques.

Anecdotal records were checked 5% of the time. This too, can be regarded as a poor showing. Anecdotal records can be used to incorporate many of the other aids. They give a teacher an opportunity for direct, subjective observation. Anecdotal



records often tell more about the child than any standardized or commercial type tests. The reasons that anecdotal records may play such an unimportant part in the methods of tentatively grouping children are listed below:

1. Teachers may feel that they are too time consuming.
2. Teachers may not be familiar with the methods of using anecdotal records.
3. Some teachers may keep "mental" notes about the individual children rather than systematic anecdotal records.
4. Some school administrators may feel that anecdotal records are too subjective and may encourage prejudice on the part of the teacher.

Commercial reading tests were chosen only 7% of the time. This can be considered as a poor showing, since so many excellent reading tests are available on the market today. Many of the basic series that were used by the teachers participating in this study, have reading tests and reading readiness tests that are prepared for the use of the classroom teachers. In the preceding chapter there is a list of approved commercial type reading tests. The following variables may be considered when studying the results of TABLE I in regards to commercial reading tests:

1. Expense of commercial reading tests.
2. Lack of training on the part of the classroom teacher in administering and interpreting the tests.



3. Teachers may use standard achievement tests and other devices in place of commercial reading tests.

Standard achievement tests were used 9.5% of the time and intelligence tests were used 13.5% of the time. There seems to be a tendency for school systems to pick or use only one commercially prepared test, whether it be a commercial type reading test, intelligence test or standard achievement test. This can be seen more easily in TABLE II.

TABLE II

A COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER OF TIMES COMMERCIAL READING TESTS, STANDARD ACHIEVEMENT TESTS, AND INTELLIGENCE TESTS WERE PICKED

TYPE TEST	Number of Times Checked	Number Checked Only the One Test	Number Checked More than One Test
Standard Achievement Test	35	32	3
Intelligence Test	50	43	7
Commercial Reading Test	25	21	4

Some of the same reasons can be applied to intelligence tests and standard achievement tests in regard to their not being more frequently used, as were given for commercial reading tests.

Emotional status was checked as being used 9.5% of the



time. Physical status was checked only 3.5% of the time. This may seem strange since physical status is easier to measure (in most cases) than emotional status. The reason that it may play a more important role in the minds of the Massachusetts teachers the relationship between emotional status and sociability within the group. Although, no question was asked concerning the methods of determining the emotional status of the child, it may be assumed that in most cases it was determined by observational techniques of teachers and trained personnel.

Experience background was checked 11.5% of the time. It is encouraging to find out that many of the teachers are aware of the need to know the experience background of the child. Experience background was used more than physical or emotional status.

Previous records, from the results of the study, seem to play an important part in determining the pre-grouping or tentative grouping of children for reading instruction. Previous records were checked 19% of the time. How comprehensive these records were, was not determined. The record could be a rating card or it could be a detailed study of many factors related to the child. Many of the teachers that checked previous records noted also that they had conferences with the pupils' former teachers. This seems to be more in the order of oral records. Whether oral or written, there is little doubt that previous records can be of great help to the teachers.



Informal reading periods were most frequently checked. This included what many of the teachers called "performance" tests. Many of the teachers that used only one device for determining the tentative grouping of their classes, picked informal reading periods. Of the twelve teachers using only one aid, nine picked informal reading periods.

There was space given on the questionnaire for "write-ins". Some of the devices used for tentative grouping, that are not included in TABLE I, are listed below. In some cases they are indicative of poor or unsatisfactory methods. In other cases they are excellent devices and methods.

1. Family appearance
2. Application
3. Inventory test
4. Teacher-made comprehension test
5. Mental age

Judging or grouping children by family appearance would not seem to be an orthodox procedure in a democratic society. It is not a good idea to "judge a book by its cover". Of course, teachers may be able to tell a great deal about a child by his appearance but should not use his "family" appearance for grouping. Teachers may be able to tell whether his appearance indicates he has attention at home in regard to clothes, etc. But setting up the groups according to family traits or appearances would lead to prejudice on the part of the teacher and the other



pupils. There is little to make teachers believe that family appearance has anything to do with a child's growth in reading.

There seems to be little or no agreement about the number of aids to be used in grouping the children. As has been previously stated -- the more we know about the child the better will be the results.

TABLE III shows the number of aids used by the teachers. The number of aids that was commonly used was three or four. The actual average was 3.68. One aid may not be considered sufficient for grouping the children. On the otherhand, too many devices and tests, would lead to confusion. There definitely appears to be a need for more aids in grouping children.

It would be an excellent practice if the school systems had most of the following aids at the disposal of the teachers:

1. At least one commercial test (intelligence, reading, or achievement)
2. Previous records (including physical, emotional, anecdotal records, etc.)
3. Informal reading periods or performance tests.

TABLE III

SUMMARY OF THE NUMBER OF AIDS USED BY EACH TEACHER

NUMBER OF AIDS	Number of Teachers Using the Aids	Percent
0	0	0
1	12	11.6
2	20	19.4
3	24	23.3
4	12	17.5
5	8	7.8
6	11	10.7
7	5	4.8
8	3	2.9
9	2	2.0



CHAPTER VI

GROUP DIVISIONS

1927-1928

FOURTH DIVISION

CHIEF OF DIVISION

## CHAPTER VI

### GROUP DIVISIONS

Class Size -- As a means of coping with crowded classrooms, teachers have begun to experiment with group size. The formation of sub-groups has been recommended as an effective means of overcoming some of the disadvantages of a crowded classroom. The techniques which are involved require definite changes in the present physical structure and equipment of our classrooms.

Movable chairs, portable blackboards, circular tables, and folding partitions contribute to the desired classroom flexibility. Rigidity in teaching methods and techniques are definitely related to such things as the rigid desks, periodic bells, immovable fixtures, and flexible standards so prevalent in our classrooms. The attention that is directed toward individual differences must be applied largely through group methods in the pursuit of group goals.<sup>1</sup>

The size of the class is a crucial factor in the evaluation of an educational program. High levels of professional competency has been demonstrated by master teachers in classrooms where enrollment has ranged from 35 to 50. By and large, however, the child gets a better break when the first grade classroom enrollment is limited to 20 or 25

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Seton, D. A. Education Group Processes: "Some Implications in the Field of Education" Education. Vol. 73 (Oct. 1952) p. 137



pupils. This enrollment may be increased as the pupils acquire tools that make them more and more independent in succeeding grades.<sup>2</sup>

With the number of children in our schools, today, it is difficult to keep the sizes of the classes at the suggested practical number. Grouping may be able to facilitate more individual attention.

Although modern portable furniture features may help to make grouping more practical, it does not have to prohibit the use of grouping if portable furniture is not available. A good teacher can overcome this problem.

Number of Groups -- It is suggested by Harris that two groups are better for the teacher who is just learning to use group instruction.<sup>3</sup>

Tinker believes that in first grade, three groups appear best. These are organized largely on the basis of level of development in reading readiness. Later in the year, as the children learn to cooperate in group work; as the spread in reading performance increases; and as the teacher acquires a more thorough understanding of specific pupil needs, additional groups may be formed.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>

Betts, E. A. Foundations of Reading Instruction. New York: American Book Co. 1946. p. 393.

<sup>3</sup>

Harris, A. J. How to Increase Reading Ability. 2nd ed. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1947. p. 182.

<sup>4</sup>

Tinker, Miles A. Teaching Elementary Reading. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 1952. p. 203.



It is well for a teacher to use her own judgment in the number of groups she can best use. A few factors that influence the number of groups are listed below:

1. Size of class
2. Range of abilities
3. Practibility
4. Pre-experience of the teacher with grouping
5. Factors concerned with emotions, sociability etc.
6. Pre-experience of children with group process
7. Goals to be accomplished

At any grade level the number of groups tends to vary between two and five. The reason for this is that more than five is probably not practical, and of course, less than two would revert back to the traditional one-group method. The ideal situation would be to have each child be an individual group, but of course, this would create an impossible situation. Too many groups usually results in confusion and might even bring about less individual attention.

A teacher may change the number of groups during the year. It is up to her to find out the number of groups that will serve the children best.

Betts believes that if the assumption is made that education increases individual differences, that more groups should be required at higher grade levels or better still differen-



tiated curricula and the guidance of reading in every day activities.<sup>5</sup>

After a teacher has experimented with grouping procedures, she soon recognizes a wide range of achievement levels and needs within a given group. In order to meet this problem the experienced teacher is likely to decrease the size of each group and therefore, the number of groups is increased until she approaches a highly individualized form of instruction.

According to Betts, this is not in line with recent thinking. The reading authority believes when a teacher is required to administer more than four or five groups for any type of reading instruction, she has more than she can do. There is a very real limit to which grouping may be used.<sup>6</sup>

Size of Groups -- The size of the groups to be used will depend somewhat on the size of the class. Other factors, such as interests and needs, also enter the size of the groups. And of course, the size of the groups should be fluid throughout the teaching year. The size of the group should be the smallest group in which it is possible to have represented at a functional level all the socialization and achievement skills required for the particular learning activity at hand.

Hollis T. Caswell believes that the individualized

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<sup>5</sup> Betts, E. A. Op. Cit. p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 393



approach to education may be hard on the teacher, but its results are proportionately worth while. To attain it, small groups are required. The difficulty of giving individualized instruction is in direct proportion to the size of the group.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the reading authorities seem to agree that the maximum number in a group should not exceed 12 to 15 pupils. More than that may result in less individualized instruction.

In deciding the size of the groups, it would be wise to follow the suggestion of H. A. Thelen that the size of the groups should be the smallest group in which it is possible to have represented at a functional level all the socialization and achievement skills required for the particular activity at hand.<sup>8</sup>

The individual groups may vary in size. The exceptional groups, i.e. the "superior" and "inferior" groups may be smaller than the "average" group. Of course, this will vary with the abilities met in each individual class. For example, if a class had 27 children, seven may be in the "superior" group, 13 in the "average group, and seven in the "inferior" group. This is not a hard and fast rule, but the beginning teacher may consider it.

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Caswell, Hollis T. Curriculum Improvement. New York: Bureau Of Publications. Columbia Univ. 1950. p. 126

8

Thelen, H. A. "Group Dynamics in Instruction: Principle o Least Group Size" School Review . 57 (March 1949) pp. 139-48.



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CHAPTER VII

INTERPRETATION OF GROUP DIVISION DATA

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INTERPRETATION OF  
GROUP DIVISION DATA

The Size of the Classes Used in This Study -- The 102 teachers participating in this study represented 3,095 children of the Massachusetts Public School System. The size of the classes varied from 16 to 40 children. The study dealt specifically with the primary grades. The average size of the classes was 30.34. This may seem to be quite high, but crowded conditions are concentrated in this area. In a few years it will move up to the intermediate grades and there progress up the educational scale. This may explain why the average seems to be high in a period where there is emphasis on small classes and individual attention. TABLE IV shows the breakdown of classes used in this study.

TABLE IV

A BREAKDOWN OF THE SIZE OF CLASSES BY GRADES THAT  
ARE USED IN THIS STUDY

GRADE*	Number of Grades Represented	Number of children Represented	Average Number in Class
1	39	1166	29.9
2	31	1026	33.0
3	24	702	29.2

\* combination grades are not included in this table.



From TABLE IV we can see that first and third grades have approximately the same number in each class, while second grade has more pupils. This is further indicated by the fact that the lowest number of pupils in second grade is 26 pupils; while in first, the lowest number is 20; and in third, the lowest number is 22. This seems to bring out the point that the children this year, 1955, are concentrated more in the second grade than either of the other two grades. The size of the classes does make a greater problem for the teacher who is grouping her children for the purpose of reading instruction.

The number of Groups Used in This Study -- The number of groups is definitely related to the size of the class. Many other factors may also determine the number of groups that a teacher will use. In fact, 9 teachers that participated in this study varied the number of groups during the year, as needed. TABLE V shows the frequency of the number of groups used.

It can be easily seen by TABLE V that the trend is to have three groups. Four groups is also popular with 35% of the teachers participating using this number. The reading authorities recommend three groups, but say that the groups can vary from two to five. There were no teachers using only one group. Undoubtedly, any teacher using only one group would not return the questionnaire because she would not feel she was using grouping. Therefore, there



may still be some teachers using one group that are not represented in this study.

TABLE V

SUMMARY OF THE NUMBER OF GROUPS USED BY THE TEACHERS

NUMBER OF GROUPS*	Frequency of Use	Percent
1	0	0
2	5	5.0
3	52	51.0
4	36	35.0
5	9	9.0

Approximate Number in Each Group as Indicated in This Study -- There seems to be little agreement as to the size of the groups. Of course, this all depends on many factors, such as original group size and individual problems and the range of ability throughout the class.

The smaller the number of groups, the greater number of pupils there will be in the groups. For instance, if a teacher only uses two groups in a class of 24 pupils, her groups may be divided into 12 and 12. While another teacher with 24 pupils, using three groups, may divide her class into 8, 8, and 8. This may be seen more clearly in FIGURE 1.

\*only present grouping was used.



TABLE VI

APPROXIMATE NUMBER IN GROUP 1

NUMBER IN EACH GROUP	Frequency	Number of Children Represented
1	0	0
2	1	2
3	0	0
4	1	4
5	0	0
6	5	30
7	7	49
8	8	64
9	9	81
10	26	260
11	9	99
12	8	96
13	7	91
14	9	126
15	7	91
16	0	0
17	2	34
18	2	36
19	0	0
20	0	0
21	0	0
22	1	22

TABLE VII

APPROXIMATE NUMBER IN GROUP 2

NUMBER IN EACH GROUP	Frequency	Number of Children Represented
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
4	2	8
5	0	0
6	4	24
7	8	56
8	19	152
9	8	72
10	28	280
11	9	99
12	16	192
13	1	13
14	4	56
15	4	60
16	1	16
17	0	0
18	1	18
19	0	0



TABLE VIII

APPROXIMATE NUMBER IN GROUP 3

NUMBER IN EACH GROUP	Frequency	Number of Children Represented
1	0	0
2	1	2
3	4	12
4	8	32
5	19	95
6	12	72
7	11	77
8	22	176
9	7	70
10	11	110
11	2	22
12	1	12
13	0	0
14	1	14

TABLE IX

APPROXIMATE NUMBER IN GROUP 4

NUMBER IN EACH GROUP	Frequency	Number of Children Represented
1	3	3
2	5	10
3	11	33
4	7	28
5	9	45
6	5	30
7	1	7
8	0	0
9	2	18
10	1	10

TABLE X

APPROXIMATE NUMBER IN GROUP 5

NUMBER IN EACH GROUP	Frequency	Number of Children Represented
1	1	1
2	6	12



TABLE VI, TABLE VII, TABLE VIII, TABLE IX, and TABLE X show the approximate number in each group as indicated by the teachers participating in this study. They do not give us a clear picture of the trends in the number of children in each group, but they do help us to see where the frequencies are located. TABLE XI sums up the information on the preceding pages.

TABLE XI

AVERAGE NUMBER IN EACH GROUP

GROUP	Average Number of Pupils in Each Group
1*	9.92
2	10.00
3	6.90
4	4.28
5	1.83

It can easily be seen in TABLE XI that group 2 has the largest number of pupils. It is surprising that group 1 is a close second with an average of 9.92 pupils. This of course, does not follow the suggestion of reading authorities that the average group be the largest. One reason that teachers may put more pupils into the first group, is that children in the first group usually do more independent work and that would leave the teachers with more time to spend with the other groups.

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\*Superior group.



The reading authorities recommend that there be no more than twelve pupils in each group. We can see by TABLE XI that the number of pupils in each group does not average over ten. Group 2, however, averages at 10.0.

The reason that group 5 averages only 1.83 is because most of the teachers using five groups noted that the one child, or few children in that group were special problems. For example: one of the teachers noted on the questionnaire that the child in her fifth group was a foreign language problem.

TABLE XII helps us to see the average number of pupils by the number of groups used.

TABLE XII

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PUPILS BY NUMBER OF GROUPS USED

NUMBER OF GROUPS USED	AVERAGE NUMBER OF PUPILS				
	Group 1	2	3	4	5
2	16.8	10.6			
3	10.8	10.2	7.2		
4	10.0	10.2	7.6	4.3	
5	9.4	8.3	5.7	3.4	1.7

FIGURE 1 shows this graphically.



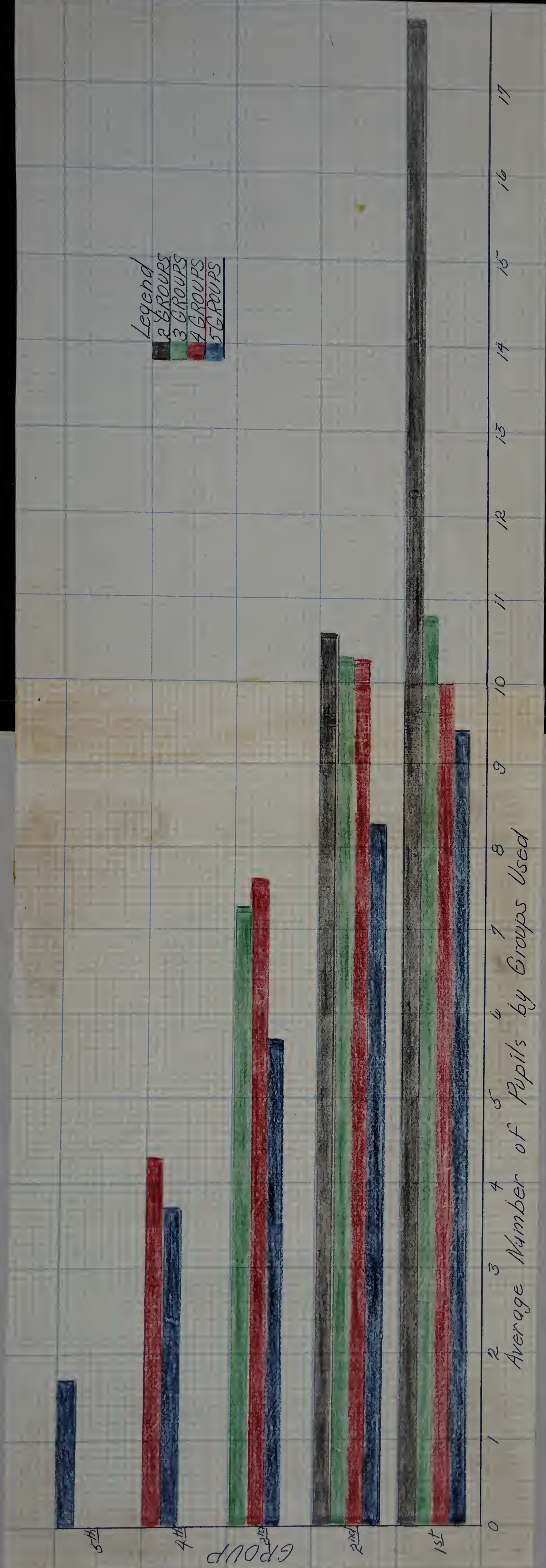


Figure 1. Average Number of Pupils by Numbers of Groups Used



From TABLE XII and Figure 1 we can see that smaller the number of groups, the more pupils will be in the groups. This is true, however, if the class is average size, but would not be true if the class was abnormally small or abnormally large.

We can also see from the graphical representation that the number of pupils in each group, where there are five groups, is very small compared to the pupils in two groups. There is also a definite decline in the number of pupils as the groups descend in ability.

TABLE XIII will help us to see the percent of the pupils in the class in each group.

TABLE XIII

PERCENT OF CLASS IN EACH GROUP

NUMBER OF GROUPS USED	PERCENT OF CLASS				
	Group 1	2	3	4	5
2	61.3	38.7			
3	38.3	36.0	25.7		
4	31.3	31.7	23.6	13.5	
5	33.0	29.0	20.0	12.0	6.0

From the above table we can see that in cases where only two groups are used, the largest percent of the pupils is in the first group. Where three groups are used, the first and second groups have almost the same percent of pupils. This is also true of the four and five group category.



It is surprising that 33% of the pupils in the five group category are in group one. As the groups descend in ability, the percent of pupils in the groups descend sharply. In Figure 2 we can see this pictured more clearly.

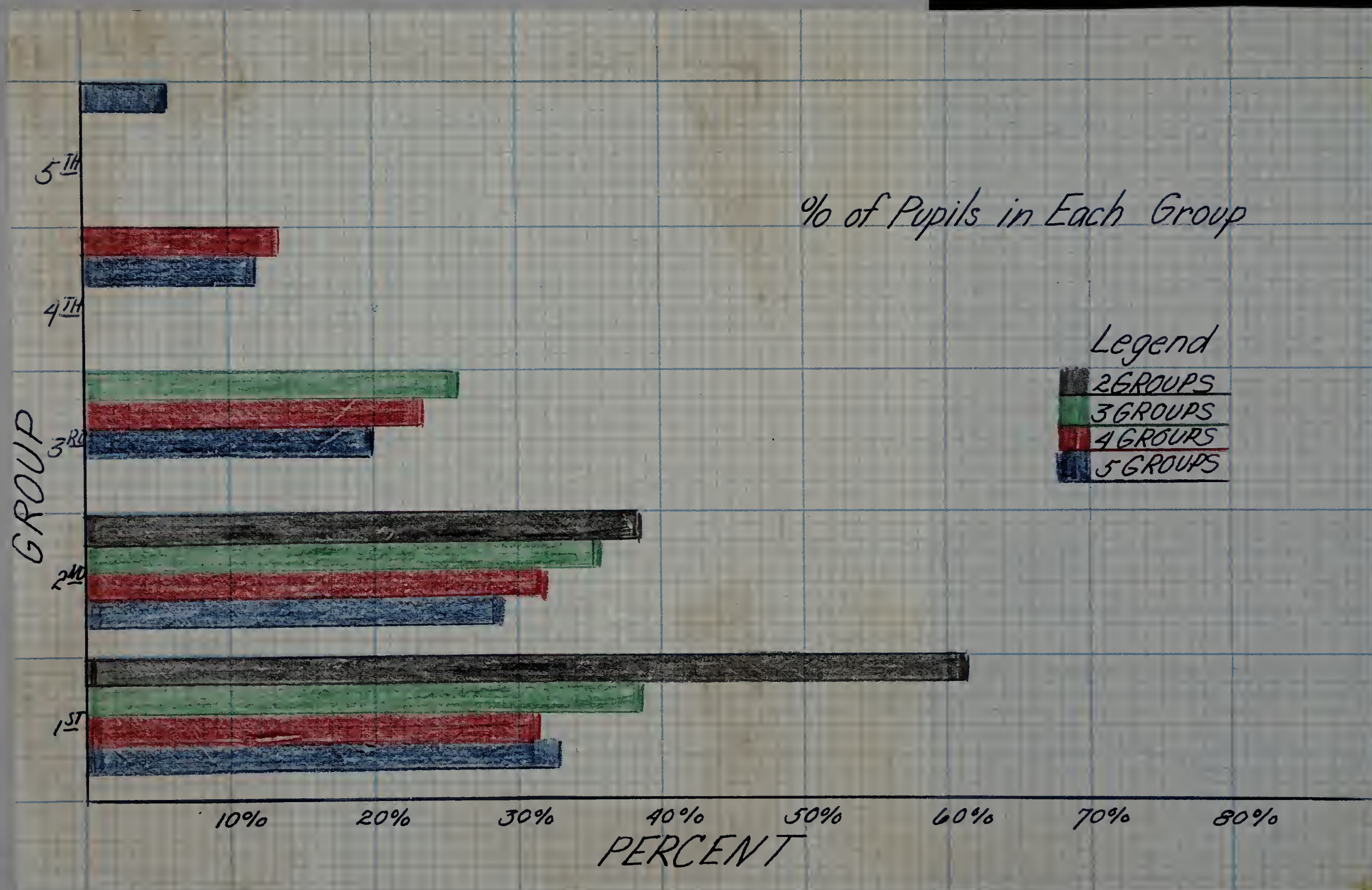


Figure 2. Percent of Pupils in Each Group



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CHAPTER VIII

FLEXIBILITY



## CHAPTER VIII

### FLEXIBILITY

Intergroup Competition -- One problem that may be encountered using subgroups may be intergroup competition and hostility. This may be the result of rigid and regimented sub-grouping. The attitude toward reading may be negative as a result of this rigid grouping. The subgroups may even tend to be bored, to be aggressive and otherwise unable to work effectively.

In speaking of the principles of least group size, H. A. Thelen points out some basic psychological needs which may be expressed in extremely subtle behaviors such as clique formation or communicated almost subvocally or non-verbally as a group.<sup>1</sup>

The teacher must avoid these hostile clique formations. The members of the group should, of course, be bonded together, but with the joy of shared accomplishments. This bond will be an educational spur of great importance and effectiveness. But if the group represents a defensive coalition formed in the face of real or fancied hostility or aggression by the rest of the class, the rivalry and intergroup aggression is almost sure to ensue.

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<sup>1</sup>

Thelen, H. A. "Group Dynamics in Instruction -- Principle of Least Group Size". School Review. (March 1949) pp. 139-48



Frustration -- If the ability groups are not kept flexible there may be a tendency for some children to become frustrated. In fact, some of the children may give up the struggle entirely.

In a West Coast school system, it was found that, after ability grouping within each classroom had been in effect in grade after grade, many of the children who were in the slowest group, year after year, finally lost all sense of their own worth. When given a sociometric test, these children were unable or unwilling to express any choice of a child to work with or sit next to.<sup>2</sup>

Achieving Satisfaction -- If a teacher provides (1) a range of activities in keeping with the interests, concerns, and abilities of the children in her group; (2) materials which the children enjoy working with and can learn to manipulate; and (3) an attitude of respect toward different kinds of achievements that grow out of the different activities, intergroup competition and frustration may be kept at a minimum.

As the child finds projects in which he can achieve success, he will also have the satisfaction of making a contribution to the group. He feels that he is part of the group and has no need to fight for status. In the course of a day he is likely to join in a number of

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Nedelsky, R. "Teacher's Role in the Peer Group During the Middle Childhood." Elementary School Journal. 52 (February 1952) pp. 325-34.



different groups, each time getting different satisfaction and making different kinds of contributions.

Other Subject Grouping -- It is important that grouping not be limited to just reading. The children should be able to participate in other groups according to their interests and abilities. This will discourage the formation of the cliques and the frustrations brought about by being in the "slowest" reading group year after year.

At some time during the day or week, each child should have worked with every other child in the classroom. Groupings should have a constantly changing membership to meet class needs.

Flexibility of Grouping -- The successful administration of grouping is keeping the groups flexible. Flexibility of grouping promotes personality development by challenging the pupil with appropriate learning situations and by avoiding those in which he might be frustrated by tasks too easy or too difficult.

A pupil is shifted from one group to another as his achievement level and needs vary. An occasional child may progress from the lowest reading-readiness group to the top reading group during the first six months in a first grade classroom. Then again, it is possible to overestimate a child's reading aptitude, in which instance he may find a fast-moving group too much for him.



It is the belief of Betts that those who follow a plan of limiting all reading instruction to small group activities probably do not give adequate attention to individual needs within the group. Betts further believes that this can be overcome to a degree, however, by frequent regroupings in terms of class and group interests. This is one step away from regimentation that can be observed in many classrooms.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to maintain tentative grouping. As the teacher learns more about the child, she sometimes finds that the child has been assigned to a wrong group. If his needs can be taken care of better in another group, he should be changed to another group.

Instability is produced by frequent and ill-considered shifting from group to group. The feeling of security derived from membership in a compatible group is essential for the good adjustment of most children.<sup>4</sup>

The teacher must keep in mind that the children's needs in a group are not identical. Homogeneity is brought about, in some respects, by grouping. There still remains, within the group, variation of needs and these must be attended to.

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<sup>3</sup> Betts, E. A. Foundations of Reading Instruction. New York: American Book Company, 1946. p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> Tinker, Miles A. Teaching Elementary Reading. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 1952. p. 202.



Therefore there must be flexibility within a single group through differentiated methods and materials.

There will be occasions where a child may be a member of more than one group at a time. The child, however, should not be overworked, confused or frustrated by such placement. Sometimes when a teacher is trying to find out whether the child's needs would be better served in another group, she may put the children in two groups.

The children should be allowed to visit in other groups of their choice. This will help to eliminate the "closed-door" problem between groups. Kathleen Hester suggests that during a pupil-teacher planning session, the children be told they might come to any or all of the reading groups, stay as long as they wanted to, and leave when they are ready, provided they find some useful occupation elsewhere in the room. <sup>5</sup>

At all levels, both teachers and supervisors are critical of the results of formal, rigid grouping. The danger of a fixed type of grouping, such as always three groups, have been well described by Stendler.<sup>6</sup> She points out that the three group system creates the difficulty of keeping two groups of children quietly busy while the teacher works with the third group.

<sup>5</sup>

Hester, Kathleen B. Teaching Every Child to Read. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers. 1955. p. 286.

<sup>6</sup>

Stendler, Celia B. "The Ritual of Primary Reading, "Elementary English. 25 (March 1948) pp. 153-160.

There must be many shifts of groups during the day. Thus, no one group of children feels that they work together constantly. There should be an over-all unifying interest of the room on which all members are working. Small groups within the room can be set up on an interest basis. There will be social groupings, too. It is important to be able to work with people you like sometimes. The social studies time offers unlimited opportunities for grouping on interest or social needs.

There should be times when the total group should be working together. One of the most pleasant times in the day can be when the children work as a whole unit.



CHAPTER IX

INTERPRETATION OF FLEXIBILITY DATA

CHAPTER IX

INTERPRETATION OF FLEXIBILITY DATA

The Flexibility of the Groups as Indicated by the Teachers Participating in this Study -- The results of the questionnaire question "Are your groups permanently fixed?" were very encouraging to anyone interested in the trends in reading. The results can be seen in TABLE XIV.

TABLE XIV

FLEXIBILITY OF THE GROUPS AS INDICATED  
BY THE TEACHERS

ANSWER	Number of Teachers	Percent
Groups permanently fixed	3	3.9
Groups not permanently fixed	92	90.2
No answer	7	5.9

The 90.2% of the teachers indicating that their groups were flexible definitely shows that teachers are aware of need for flexibility. The 3.9% of the teachers indicating that their groups were not flexible is a small percent, but even this small percent may make a "bad name" for the reading group system. It is in such classes that children become discouraged, lose their enthusiasm for reading, sometimes



even develop a negative attitude toward reading. Also, the small percent of teachers that keep their groups permanently fixed make it difficult for the larger percent who keep their groups flexible. These teachers have to work to correct the attitude of the child, the parent, and the general public. It makes her job much more difficult if she is faced with building up the morale of the class because the teacher before her has kept her groups fixed.

The Number of Children that Have Changed From One Group to Another as Indicated by the Participating Teachers -- The teachers were asked to estimate the number of pupils that had changed from one group to another if they kept their groups flexible. They were very cooperative in filling out this question. The results may be seen in TABLE XV.

TABLE XV

THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN THAT HAVE  
CHANGED FROM ONE  
GROUP TO ANOTHER

SIZE OF CLASS	Average Number of Children Changed	Percent of Class that has Changed
15-20	3.5	20.00
21-25	5.0	20.75
26-30	6.74	24.33
31-35	7.64	23.15
36-40	10.85	29.10



It is clear from the results of TABLE XV that the larger the size of the class, the more children that have changed from one group to another. For example: where the size of the class is between 15-20 pupils, the average number of children changed is 3.5; where the class is between 36-40 pupils, the average number is 10.85.

This can be used as a trend for teachers to follow while using groups. The larger the class size, the greater the percent of flexibility. This is shown graphically in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

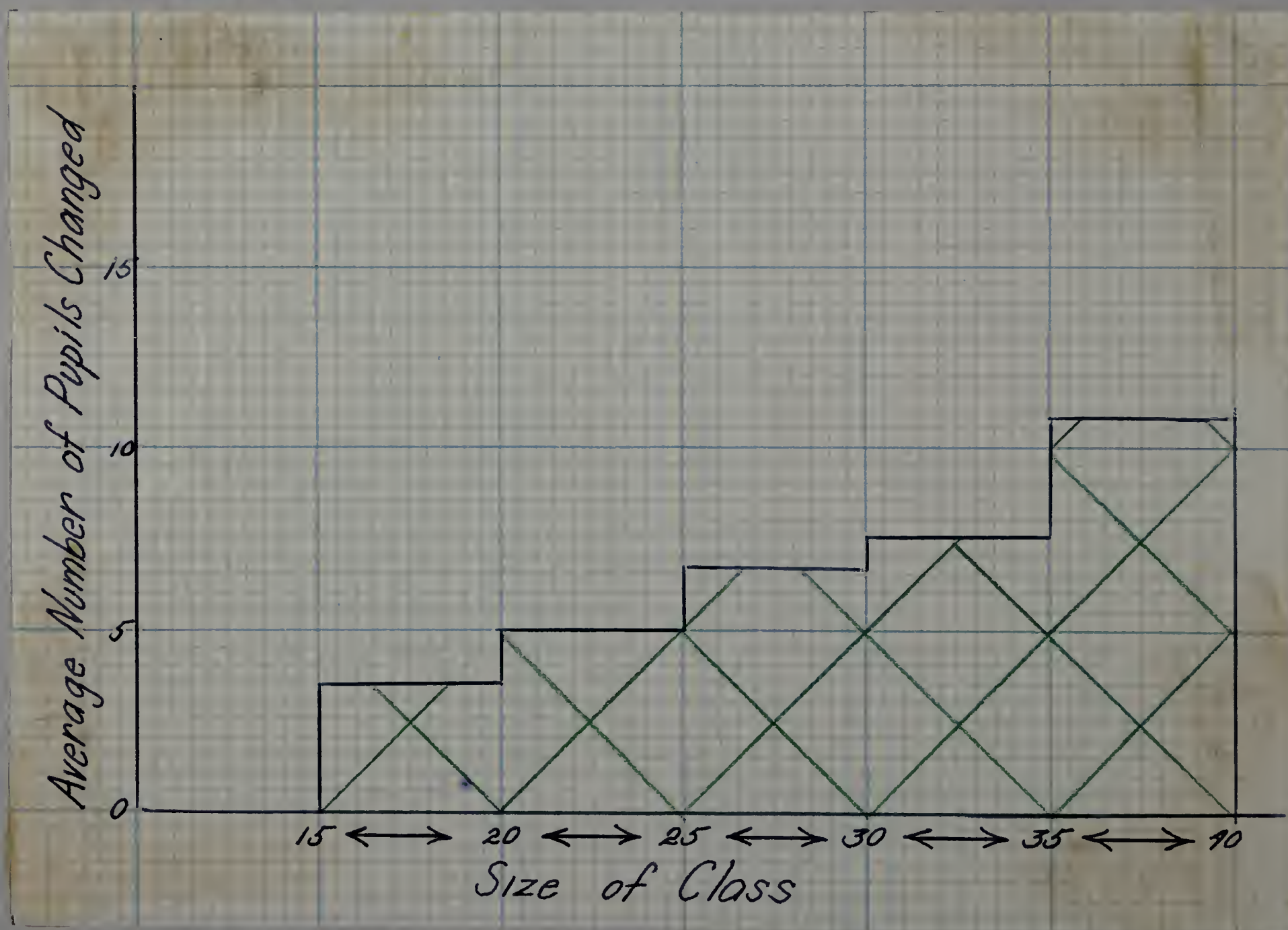


Figure 3. Average Number of Pupils that have Changed from One Group to Another by Size of Class.



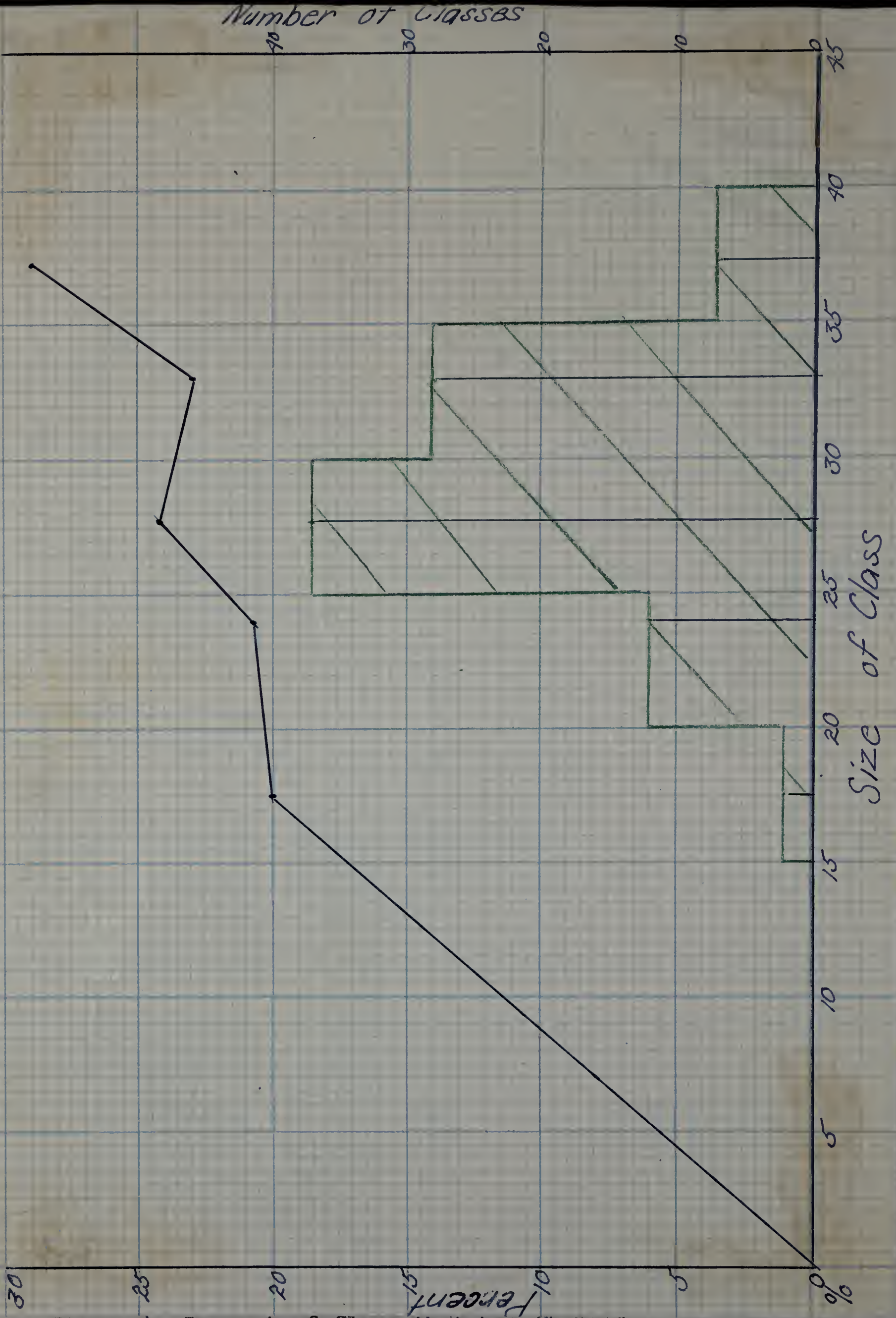


Figure 4. Percent of Class that has Changed.

CHAPTER X

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

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CHAPTER X

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

A teacher must not be afraid of grouping but be sensitive and sensible about it. Some wrong practices and pertinent problems have led in many instances to serious concern to those interested in the mental hygiene of children.

George C. Kyte states that whenever homogeneous grouping results in conditions harmful to a child or group of children, it should be abandoned unless the detrimental influences can be corrected quickly and thoroughly.<sup>1</sup>

Teacher's Attitude -- The teacher's own attitude toward the way children are learning is the key that sets the room atmosphere. If she is able to accord the same respect to a child who is not learning reading that she gives to a child who is superior in that skill, then she has come a long way toward helping the children accept their own abilities and limitations.

If grouping is new to her or to the children, it might be wise for her to bring grouping to the class in a careful and slow manner. She should use the resources afforded her in planning groups. Experienced teachers of this method may help a new teacher with the problems that arise. Reading authorities, supervisors, research personnel can be called upon to aid the teacher.

A teacher should approach grouping in a confident manner. Children are often sensitive to the actions of a teacher. She

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<sup>1</sup>

Kyte, George C. The Principal at Work. Boston: Ginn and Co. 1952. p. 427.



should never be so over-confident that she is not open to criticism, or new developments in the field of reading. And finally, she must learn from her own experiences the strengths and weaknesses of her teaching.

Naming the Groups -- In designating groups, probably the simplest and most effective means is to call a group by one of the children's names, as "John's group". This is a natural approach and does away with the stigma of the ABC grouping.

Until the children become familiar with the other children in the group, they may become confused as to which group they belong in. Until they are acquainted with the other children, it may be wise for the teacher to call the groups by the names of the same children for awhile. Then she may change the names of the groups giving each child a chance to have the group named after him.

There are many different designations that teachers use to distinguish between groups. Some are listed below:

Numbers

A B C

Animals

Flowers

TV Personalities

Title of Book Being Used

Colors

Baseball Teams



Some teachers like to let the children pick the name of their own group. But there have been instances where stigma has been created because of this "labeling".

It is easy to see what undesirable results would happen if the groups were named: (1) "Gold", (2) "Silver", and (3) "Lead", or (1) "Bluebirds", (2) "Robins", and (3) "Crow".

Calling the group by the name of a child in the group will not camouflage the ability of the groups from the children but it does help to de-emphasize the importance. If a teacher makes sure that the groups are flexible; that they work together at least once a day; and have opportunities to re-group into social and interest groups, she will have the stigma of "labeling" under control.

Tinker states that seating the pupils in the classroom by groups, results in tendencies to develop smugness and undue feelings of superiority in the high groups and discouragement and feelings of inferiority among the lower groups.<sup>2</sup>

Time -- Stendler points out that it is time consuming for a teacher to plan the work for three different groups and provide activities and materials on three different levels.<sup>3</sup>

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Tinker, Miles A. Teaching Elementary Reading. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 1952. p. 204.

3

Stendler, Celia B. "The Ritual of Primary Reading". Elementary English. 25 (March 1948) pp. 153-160.



Even with three groups, the children in a single group are still very different from one another in their abilities and interests and must be given much individual attention.

The "slow readers" will need more guided reading than the "fast readers". The later group can be given more independent work.

There is no research work available to show whether the order the groups read in has any influence on the attitude or enthusiasm for reading. But, it might be expected, that if the "slow readers" always read last, they may become "bored" or "fatigued" by the time they are called upon to read. A teacher may try varying the order in which the groups read.

The time allotted to the actual guided reading of each group depends on the number of groups in the class and the attention span of the children. Twenty to thirty minutes with each group is usually recommended by reading authorities.

Unwise Practices -- We have already mentioned some unwise practices in using grouping. Bond and Handlan have outlined a number of other unwise procedures that should be avoided in group instruction.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>

Bond, E. and Handlan B., Adapting Instruction in Reading to Individual Differences. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948. p. 178.



Among these are the following:

1. Failure to individualize instruction within a group.
2. Setting up a different course of study for each group so that the class as a whole never consider problems in common.
3. Procedures which assign each group a different task to be done with the same materials.
4. The practice of having the children in all group do exactly the same thing with different selections after these selections have been chosen as appropriate to the abilities of the groups.

Public Relations-- There have been many articles in leading periodicals and books that have been critical of the reading system now employed generally. The general public has been misinformed in many instances. One advantage of these "uncomplimentary" articles has been the interest in reading that has been aroused.

The teacher is often called upon to explain or even defend the grouping system used for reading instruction. If she is employing the program carefully ; is herself convinced of the worth of the program; and is sure of the reasons for grouping, she will have no trouble explaining grouping to parents.

Of course, if the grouping has not been used correctly, the results of her teaching may result in poor public relations. The children are an important factor in informing the public of the strengths or weaknesses of grouping. This may be done by the children telling their parents "what we did today".

It would be wise for a teacher to have a reference list of reliable books to recommend to parents who wish to know more about reading instruction.



CHAPTER XI

INTERPRETATION OF SPECIAL PROBLEM DATA

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CHAPTER XI

INTERPRETATION OF SPECIAL PROBLEM DATA

What the Teachers Participating in this Study Call Their Groups -- The teachers in the Massachusetts Public School System, indicated many different names for addressing their groups. Some even noted that they used more than one, such as: pupil's names and test book titles. In such cases, their first choice was used in completing TABLE XVI. The teachers were very cooperative in filling out this question. In many instances, they even put the reason they used the particular name. TABLE XVI shows the results of the question, "What do you call your groups?"

TABLE XVI

WHAT THE TEACHERS PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY CALL THEIR GROUPS

NAME	Number of Times Checked <sup>*</sup>	Percent
Numbers	11	10.7
Pupil's Names	56	54.9
Animals, Birds, etc.	4	3.9
Alphabet	2	1.9
Reading Books	21	20.6
Miscellaneous	7	6.8

\* one no answer



We can clearly see that "pupil's names" are used most frequently by the teachers. This is encouraging since using this category tends to avoid some detrimental effects, such as "labeling". Many of the teachers indicated that they used a different child's name every day. This is approved by the reading authorities. One of the teachers noted on her questionnaire that she did not use "pupil's names" any more because the children ask to be in "Mary's group", knowing that "Mary's group" had been the superior group the previous year. The reason "pupil's names" did not function properly in this case was because the preceding teacher did not change the name of the group frequently, but instead, called each group by the same representative name. The teacher could have remedied this by using "pupil's names", but change them frequently. It would not be long before the children would forget the standard name used.

Reading books were checked 20.6% of the time. The teachers would call the groups by the particular book that they were reading at that time. This too, helps to avoid the "labeling" of the groups but also presents some problems. What if the groups are reading the same books? This question was not answered by the teachers, but it was interesting to note that many of them that indicated "reading books" also indicated "pupil's names" as their second choice. This is probably how they met the problem of two or more groups reading the same book. It also indicates that these teachers



must be using differentiated material for the individual groups in order to use the "reading boooks" as names. This in itself is an encouraging indication.

"Numbers" were used 10.7% of the time; "Animals", "Birds", etc. 3.9% of the time; "Alphabet" 1.9% of the time; and miscellaneous other names 6.8% of the time. All of these are not very desirable as has been discussed in Chapter IX. They often lead to frustration, negative attitude toward reading, inter-group dislike, and name calling.

Some of the teachers that use any of the above let their children pick their own names. This way they felt they were being more democratic and were trying to avoid the so called "labeling" of the groups and the children. So, in many instances the slow learners had a much fancier or much more desirable name than the fast learners.

The names that were mentioned only once were not tabulated in TABLE XVI since they each represented such a small percent. They were, however, tabulated under the heading "miscellaneous". It is interesting to see them listed below:

Flowers

Colors

Seasons

TV Personalities ("Howdy Doody" etc.)

Combination Animals, Persons, Birds etc.

Butterflies, Bees etc.

Cowboys ("Roy Rogers" etc.)



Although these each represent a small percent, together they make a larger percent of teachers still using names other than "pupil's names" and "reading books". If teachers realized the advantages in using either of the two, they would be more agreeable to change the names of their groups.

Personal Reasons for Grouping as Indicated by the Teachers Participating in this Study -- The teachers seemed to be in agreement as to their personal reasons for grouping as can be seen in TABLE XVII.

TABLE XVII

PERSONAL REASONS FOR GROUPING

REASON	Number of Times Checked	Percent
Research	7	7
Effort to meet the individual needs of the pupils	90	90
Administrative instructions	0	0
Suggested by basic series	2	2
Easier to teach reading	1	1

"Effort to meet the individual needs of the pupils" was checked 90% of the time. This indicates that the majority of



the teachers have the individual child's needs at heart.

"Research" was checked 7% of the time. It was not noted exactly the type of research that was being carried out.

"Suggested by the basic series" was checked 2% of the time. These 2% show that they are not sure of their reasons for grouping but use it because it fits in more easily with the reading system being used. "Easier to teach reading" was checked by only 1% of the teachers.

It seems to be a very minor reason in the minds of teachers for grouping.

Public Relations as Indicated by the Teachers Participating in this Study -- Today public relations play an important part in reading. Teachers are often called upon to explain grouping to parents and to the general public. Different reasons were noted on the questionnaire for teachers to choose from. They were put into the language that a teacher would use in addressing a parent. TABLE XVIII shows the results of the questionnaire.

The teachers checked, "The children are able to progress according to own abilities," 69.9% of the time. "The children receive more individual attention" was checked 24.6% of the time. In both cases the teachers picked explanations that mentioned the child. The other four explanations did not bring out the advantages in grouping for the benefit of the children. A parent would be more apt to agree with the explanation if the child was mentioned. This seems to have psychological aspects.



The parents would not be interested in the reasons for grouping unless they were interested in the effects on the children.

TABLE XVIII  
REASONS TEACHERS USE IN EXPLAINING GROUPING TO PARENTS

REASON	Number of Times Checked	Percent
It is much easier to teach a small group rather than a large group.	3	2.9
The reading authorities recommend it.	0	0
It is required by the system that I teach in.	0	0
The children receive more individual attention.	25	24.6
The children are able to progress according to own abilities.	71	69.6
The results are much better than the one group method.	3	2.9

The teachers that answered this question were limited to picking only one of the explanations. In reality a teacher could use a combination of reasons. For example, she could say, "The children receive more individual atten-



tion and are able to progress according to their own abilities."

Other Grouping as Indicated by the Teachers Participating in this Study -- All of the teachers that filled out questionnaires used reading groups. We were interested in finding out if any other subject grouping was used. The teachers were asked to check any other grouping that they used. Some examples were given: arithmetic, social studies, science, and spelling. Space was given for any other subjects to be indicated. TABLE XIX shows the other subjects that were organized with grouping.

From TABLE XIX we can see that 40% of the teachers also use grouping in arithmetic. Spelling was checked 19% of the time.. Many of the teachers that used arithmetic grouping also used spelling grouping. Social studies was checked 10% of the time. Science was checked 6% of the time. Five percent of the time language arts was checked. Writing and spelling can be considered as part of language arts. Phonics can be considered as part of the reading grouping. Some of the other subjects were grouped because the teachers used the "unit method" and the children were put into interest groups rather than ability groups. Social studies and science probably were rated high because of this.



TABLE XIX  
OTHER SUBJECTS USING GROUPING

SUBJECTS	Number of Times Checked	Percent
Arithmetic	72	40.0
Social Studies	20	10.0
Science	13	6.0
Spelling	38	19.0
Writing	2	1.0
Phonics	8	4.0
Music	10	5.0
Language Arts	5	2.5
Art	1	0.5
No Other Groups	24	11.5

The number of other groups that were used by the teachers is shown in TABLE XX. It is not encouraging to see that 23.5% of the teachers use no grouping at all. Other grouping, gives the teacher a chance to re-group the children into interest and social groups. This gives the children an opportunity to work with other children. This increases the flexibility of the groups. Further advantages are given in the previous chapter.



TABLE XX

NUMBER OF OTHER GROUPS USED BY EACH TEACHER

NUMBER OF OTHER GROUPS USED	Number of Times Checked	Percent
0	24	23.5
1	22	21.5
2	30	29.5
3	17	16.7
4	9	8.8

The Group that Reads First as Indicated by the Teachers Participating in this Study -- Although there was no available information or studies indicating the group to read first, a question regarding it was asked on the questionnaire. The results are in TABLE XXI.

Since most of the classes were organized into 3 or 4 reading groups, we can see that most of the teachers had their lowest group read first. In 61% of all the classes represented, the lowest group read first as compared to 6.8% of the classes which had the highest group read first. It seems that teachers feel it more necessary for the "slow learners" to be fresh and untired from other activities. There was only one case where the "average" group read first.



Approximately 28.4% of the teachers had no fixed order for reading. They alternated their groups from day to day. It therefore, seems the trend for the Massachusetts Public School Primary Teachers to either have their "slow group" read first or to have no fixed order of reading.

TABLE XXI

WHICH GROUP READS FIRST AS INDICATED BY THE  
TEACHERS

GROUP	Number of Times Checked	Percent
1	7	6.8
2	5	4.9
3	38	37.3
4	17	16.7
5	6	5.9
No Fixed Order	29	28.4

Approximate Time Spent Each Day on Reading as Indicated by the Teachers Participating in this Study -- The teachers indicated the approximate time that they spent a day on reading. This was converted into minutes. There seems to be little difference between the classes that had three groups and those that had four groups. This can be seen more clearly in Figure 5 and Figure 6. It would be

expected that teachers with four groups would spend more time during the day for reading, but this is not so from the results of the questionnaire. The conclusion can be therefore drawn that teachers with four groups probably have to give less time to each group. However, the highest amount of time spent with reading in the three group category was 190 minutes while in the four group category 250 minutes was spent. There were only a few teachers that spent this much time with four groups. The average number of minutes spent by all the group categories was 122 minutes a day. This is somewhat higher than 20-25 minutes a group advised by the reading authorities.



# FREQUENCY POLYGON

3 Groups	
Time	Frequency
40	1
50	2
60	6
70	2
80	6
90	10
100	2
110	2
120	11
130	0
140	1
150	4
160	1
170	0
180	3

4 Groups	
Time	Frequency
40	1
50	0
60	2
70	0
80	2
90	4
100	1
110	0
120	8
130	1
140	2
150	4
160	1
170	0
180	2
240	3

Legend  
 3 Groups —  
 4 Groups - - -

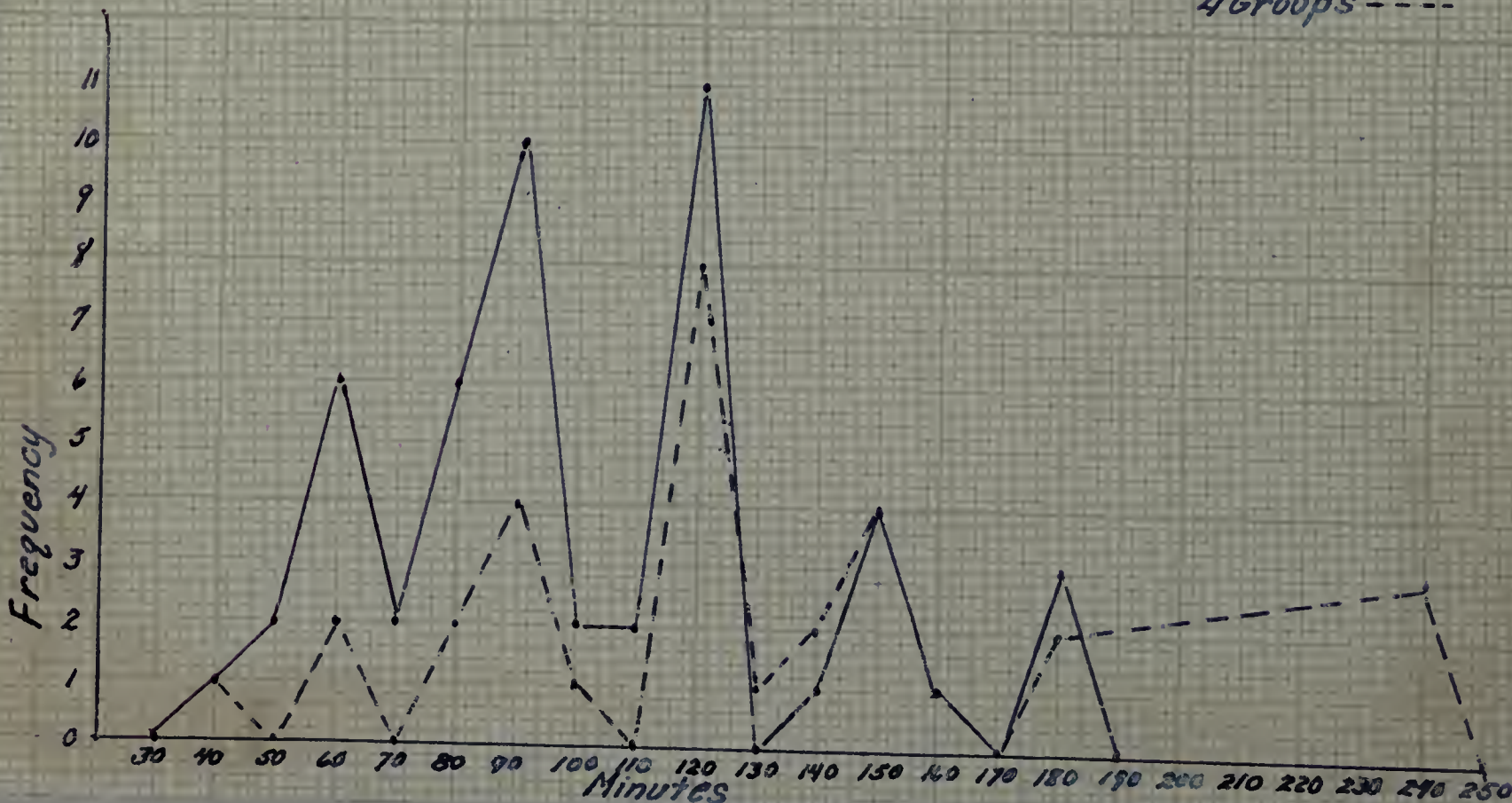


Figure 5. Approximate Length of Time for Reading (Min.)



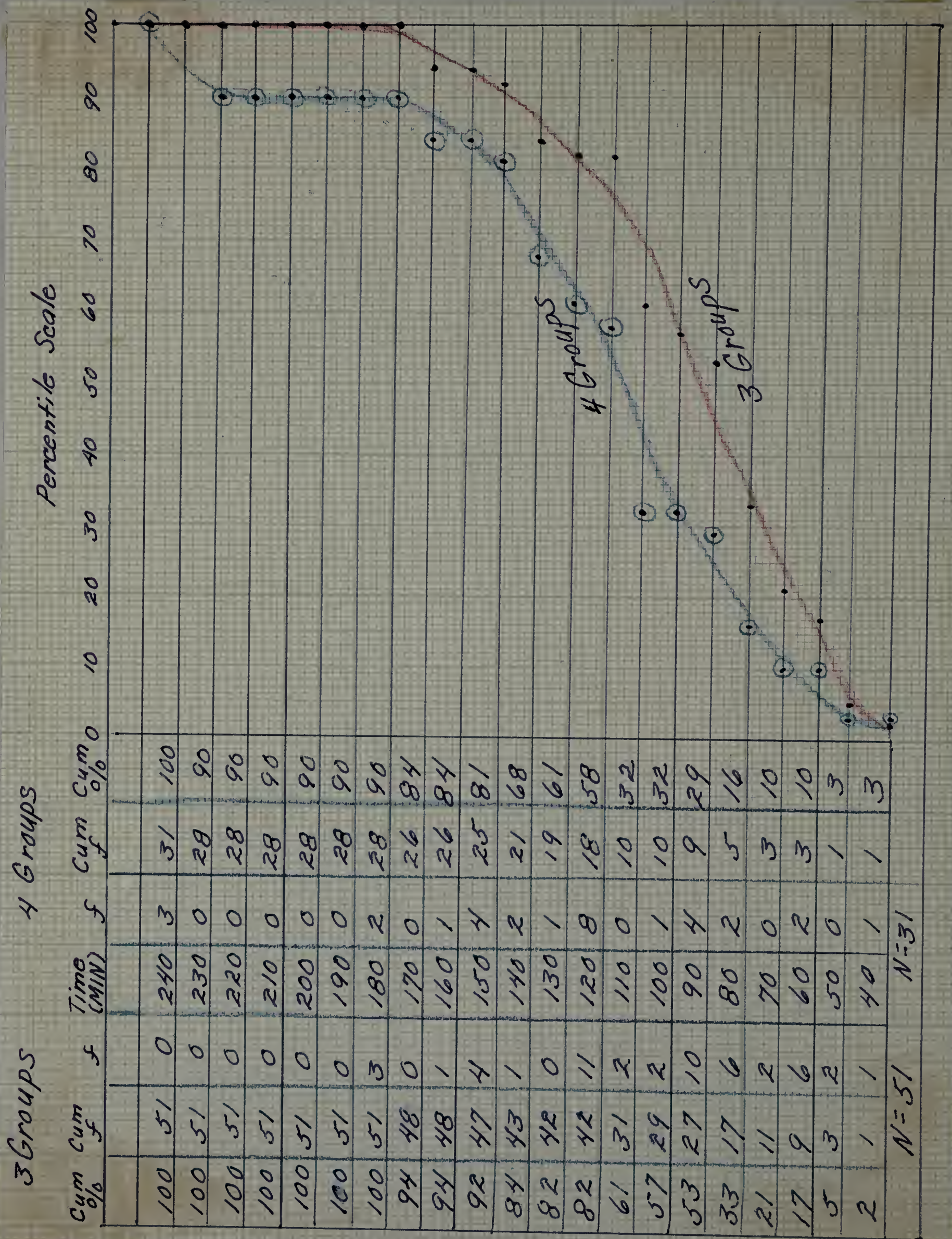


Figure 6. Percentile Curve Concerning Reading Time



Difficulties as Indicated by the Teachers Participating in this Study -- The teachers were asked to check the group where they found the most difficulty in regard to planning, guided reading and enrichment activities. The results are found in TABLE XXII.

TABLE XXII

THE GROUP WHERE THE GREATEST  
DIFFICULTY IS FOUND

GROUP	Number of Times Checked	Percent
Superior	6	6.0
Average	6	6.0
Inferior	83	81.0
No Answer	7	7.0

From this table we can conclude that most of the teachers find the greatest difficulty with the "inferior" or "slow" group. Several of the teachers that checked the "superior" group noted that it was most difficult to plan for this group. There were an equal number of teachers that felt the "average group was the most difficult.

CHAPTER XII

READING SOCIO-GRAM



## CHAPTER XII

### A READING SOCIO-GRAM

Childrens' Reading Partner Choices -- In most instances, it is the teacher that decides the reading group that a child will read in. What if the child was allowed to choose his own group? Nedelsky states that the studies that have been made, show that a child's first choice is always a child more mature than he himself.<sup>1</sup> It is one who usually can serve as a model or a guide, and as a source of confidence in the very area in which the child is having his greatest difficulty that is chosen.

Socio-grams of Two Classes -- A socio-gram was made of one class of 26 pupils and one class of 28 pupils. It was made to see whether the above statement was true.

Each student was asked to name the student he would most like to read with if he could only read with one person in the class. The same was asked about arithmetic and play. This was done to see if there was a general tendency to pick a child in a higher group, and to see if it carried over to other grouping and other activities. The questions were asked orally because the children could not fill out the form by themselves. The two classes were both second grades in the same school system. The questioning was done so that the answers could not be heard by the other members of the class.

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<sup>1</sup>

Nedelsky, R. "Teacher's Role in the Peer Group During the Middle Childhood". Elem. Sch. J. 52: 325-34 (Feb. '52)



To better understand the tables showing the results of the socio-grams, TABLE XXIII is prepared to show the grouping of the classes.

TABLE XXIII

NUMBER IN EACH GROUP BY SUBJECT

SUBJECT	NUMBER IN CLASS A			NUMBER IN CLASS B		
	Group 1	2	3	1	2	3
Reading	8	10	8	10	12	6
Arithmetic	10	10	6	9	10	9

As we can see by the above table, each class had three groups. In TABLE XXIV play is compared to reading group status.

TABLE XXIV

RESULTS OF THE SOCIO-GRAM IN CLASS A

SUBJECT	CHILD IN THE SAME GROUP			CHILD IN A HIGHER GROUP			CHILD IN A LOWER GROUP		
	Group 1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Reading	8	2	0	0	8	8	0	0	0
Arithmetic	10	3	1	0	6	5	0	1	0
Play*	4	5	5	2	3	3	2	2	1

\*

using reading group status



TABLE XXV

RESULTS OF THE SOCIO-GRAM IN CLASS B

SUBJECT	CHILD IN THE SAME GROUP			CHILD IN A HIGHER GROUP			CHILD IN A LOWER GROUP		
	Group 1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Reading	10	2	0	0	10	6	0	0	0
Arithmetic	9	1	1	0	9	8	0	0	0
* Play	7	6	1	2	2	2	1	4	3

From the results of the socio-grams given in the two classes we can see that the children do pick other children in groups higher than themselves and therefore children that do have something to offer them. Some of them picked children in the same group. The children in Group 1 could not pick anyone in a higher group so they are concentrated in the same group category. Class B had one that picked a partner from a lower group. Class A had only one child that picked a child from a lower group. This was in arithmetic.

Play was used as compared to the reading group status. It is easy to see that the children picked children from every group-- the same group, a higher group, and even many from the lower group.

It is difficult to tell whether the children felt that they could benefit from the more mature child or whether

\*

using reading group status

the child wanted to be associated with the more superior child because of prestige. This may show a tendency for a child to strive towards the "approved" group.

We should give the child an opportunity to work with these children of his choice. This may be done in interest and social groups. Since not all children will get their first choice, the unchosen child should get the support of his first choice. The children who are chosen by a number of children are likely to be those who are already quite successful in establishing relations with other children and who are likely to function in any group with success and with enjoyment.



CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS,  
AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

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### CHAPTER XIII

#### CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Conclusions -- There does not seem to be any one best method of grouping pupils for reading instruction. Opinions seem to vary greatly concerning the basis on which grouping should be made. The following factors and variables influence the basis of grouping:

1. availability of materials
2. competence of the teacher
3. range of ability and age within the class
4. experience and interest of the children
5. specific needs of the children
6. amount of experience the children have had in working together

Many devices or aids can be used in the preliminary orientation in choosing the groups. Most of the teachers use at least two devices. The informal reading period appears to be the most popular.

The number of groups depends upon several factors. The competence of the teacher and range of ability in the class seem to influence the number of groups. The original size of the class appears to determine the number of groups also.

The size of each group depends largely upon the number



of pupils in a class with relatively common needs and interests. The study showed that the average size of the groups was 12 pupils.

Flexibility of both organization and instructional procedures is essential to achieve best results. It is advisable for a teacher to maintain somewhat tentative groupings. Most of the teachers participating in the study did so. As the class sizes increased so did the flexibility of the classes.

TABLE XXVI shows a summary of the teachers evaluation of grouping in terms of the child and the reading group. It points out the weaknesses of the reading group in terms of the child.

We can see by TABLE XXVI that teachers feel that the children are distracted by the different activities going on in the room at the same time. None of the teachers felt that it was against our democratic principles or at least they felt that some other weakness was more important. Twenty-five teachers felt that the children feel "labeled". This can be remedied by keeping the groups flexible and introducing interest groups. Twenty of the teachers felt that the children feel a great sense of competition.

TABLE XXVI shows that 27 of the teachers believe that there is really no outstanding weakness in regards to the child and the reading group.



TABLE XXVI

WEAKNESSES OF THE READING GROUP IN TERMS OF THE CHILD

WEAKNESSES	Number of Times Checked	Percent
The children feel "labeled".	25	24.5
It is against our democratic principles	0	0
Children feel a great sense of competition.	20	19.5
Children are distracted by the different activities going on in the room.	30	28.5
No weakness.	27	26.5

TABLE XXVII shows a summary of the teachers evaluation of grouping in terms of the child and the reading group. It points out the strengths of the reading group in terms of the child.

"Children are able to progress according to their own abilities" was chosen 69% of the time by the teachers. "Children receive more individual attention" was picked 21% of the time. Only 10% of the teachers felt that the most outstanding strength of grouping in terms of the child, was that "Children are able to use a greater variety of materials."



TABLE XXVII

STRENGTHS OF THE READING GROUP IN TERMS OF THE CHILD

STRENGTHS	Number of Times Checked	Percent
Children are able to progress according to own abilities.	70	69.0
Children receive more individual attention.	22	21.0
Children are able to use a greater variety of materials.	10	10.0

The three choices that were given the teachers are all inter-related. Usually, when the children receive more individual attention, they do use a greater variety of materials and also are able to progress according to their own abilities. The reason teachers picked "Children are able to progress according to their own abilities" more often may be because this is probably the end result of the other two strengths.

The teachers were also asked to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in terms of the classroom teacher. TABLE XXVIII shows us the weaknesses that were evaluated by the teachers. From this table we can see that teachers picked "Difficult to plan seatwork that is meaningful in order to keep the class 'busy' while you give attention to the group"



41.5% of the time. We can see by this weakness that there is a need for greater training on the part of the teachers in preparing meaningful seatwork. Some of the teachers noted that this was not so much a weakness of the reading groups, but rather, a weakness of the teacher herself. If the seatwork is meaningful and not just "busy work" the teacher will have less difficulty in this area. Some of the teachers that were consulted about this problem believed that they had trouble planning the work for the different rates of working ability. For instance: they would give the seatwork to several children of approximately the same ability. Some would take a short time in completing the seatwork, others a moderate amount of time, and still others would spend all day -- if allowed. The teacher must not expect all the children to complete the same amount of work. On the other hand, she should have a variety of other activities that the "speedy" child may do on his own. Otherwise, the teacher and her reading group will be interrupted often by the familiar question, "I'm all done with my work ! What can I do now?"



TABLE XXVIII

WEAKNESSES OF THE READING GROUP IN TERMS OF THE TEACHER

WEAKNESSES	Number of Times Checked	Percent
Working with groups is time consuming.	18	17.5
Difficult to divide into groups because ability range is too wide.	25	24.5
Difficult to plan seat- work that is meaningful in order to keep the class "busy".	42	41.5
Parents resent grouping.	1	1.0
No answer.	16	15.5

"Difficult to divide into groups because ability range is too wide" was chosen 24.5% of the time in TABLE XXVIII. Undoubtedly, even the most competent teacher will never have perfect grouping. This is one reason she must keep her groups flexible. For more efficient grouping, teachers use two to five groups. This by no means approaches the individual ability ranges of all the children. The teacher must use all the devices and aids at her disposal in dividing the children into groups.

"Working with groups is time consuming" was checked 17.5% of the time. Common sense tells us that the multiple grouping method does take more time for planning and administering than the one



group method. A teacher should organize her day carefully. It is recommended that in the primary grades, 20 to 25 minutes per group is sufficient. The reading groups should never be so emphasized that the other subject matter suffers.

Only one teacher checked "Parents resent grouping" as the outstanding weakness. Since we are unable to determine the nature of her answer, we may presume that she had an unfortunate experience with a parent or parents. Good public relations and correct information about reading groups would help to overcome this weakness.

Fifteen percent of the teachers felt that there were no outstanding weaknesses concerning the reading groups and the teachers.

TABLE XXIX shows the evaluation of the strengths of the reading groups in regard to the classroom teacher. A little more than seventy percent of the teachers checked "Teacher can give more individual attention to the child" as an outstanding strength of the reading groups. "Teacher can use differentiated books, seatwork, etc." was checked 19.5% of the time. Only 10% of the teachers felt that it is "Easier to teach a small group than a large group."

Of course, all these are strengths of the reading groups and are inter-related also. While teaching in a small group, a teacher can use differentiated materials and can give more individual attention to the child.



TABLE XXIX

STRENGTHS OF THE READING GROUP IN TERMS OF THE TEACHER

STRENGTHS	Number of Times Checked	Percent
Easier to teach a small group than a large group.	10	10.0
Teacher can give more individual attention to the child.	72	70.5
Teacher can use differentiated books, seatwork, etc.	20	19.5

The teachers were asked if they had their choice, would they continue using reading groups. TABLE XXX shows the results of the questionnaire.

TABLE XXX

FUTURE GROUPING

ANSWER	Number of Times Checked	Percent
Yes	101	99
No	0	0
No Answer	1	1

It is gratifying to note that 99% of the teachers would continue using reading groups if they had the



choice. We must conclude from this that teachers feel that the efforts they put into the reading groups is well worth the results for the teacher and for the individual child.

Recommendations -- In completing this study, the following recommendations can be made as an aid to the primary teachers using reading groups for the purpose of reading instruction.

1. When setting up groups consider the range of ability and age within the class, the experience and interest of the children, specific needs of the children, physical, emotional and social status of the children, and amount of experience the children have had in working together.
2. When setting up the physical aspects of the groups make sure that the environment of the room is pleasant but not distracting, the number of groups is practical, the size of the groups does not exceed 10 to 12 pupils, the time per group should not exceed 20 to 25 minutes, and there is a supply of differentiated materials on hand.
3. In administering the groups keep the groups flexible; avoid contrasting attitudes of the teacher toward high and low groups; individualize instruction within the group; assign different tasks to be done with different materials; and adjust instruction to deal with individual differences arising from speech defects, poor hearing and vision, retarded readers, slow learners, and very rapid learners.



4. In unifying the class, the teacher should bring the class together at least once a day in some activities; should use other grouping such as interest for other subjects; seatwork and enrichment activities should be interesting and meaningful.

Suggestions for Further Study -- The study does not by any means exhaust the field of reading grouping. There are many phases that still may have to be more thoroughly explored. A few of the possible suggestions for further study are listed below in question form.

1. What do we mean by meaningful seatwork and how can it be applied to reading groups?
2. What previous records do teachers use for grouping?
3. What commercial tests are used most effectively by the elementary teachers?
4. Which group should read first or should there be no fixed order of reading?
5. How can teachers employ grouping more effectively in other subject matter?
6. Why do teachers feel that the greatest difficulty is found in the "slow" group?
7. Is grouping against our democratic principles?
8. How can teachers, supervisors, and administrators do a better public relations job?

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APPENDICES

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL  
FORWARDED WITH QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE



APPENDIX I

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

April 25, 1955

Superintendent of Schools  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

The enclosed material is part of a study to made on the subject of grouping in the primary grades for the purpose of reading instruction. It is being made under the supervision of the Department of Education, University of Maasachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts.

It would be greatly appreciated if you will distribute the questionnaires and return envelopes to the primary teachers under your supervision. If there are not enough forms for all your primary teachers, will you forward them to those teachers, that in your opinion, would be most interested?

Since grouping is a highly controversial subject today, I am sure you and your teachers will be interested in the results of this survey. A copy of the results will be sent to you and to your participating teachers.

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation. I am sure the results will be of benefit to you and to your teachers.

Very truly yours,

Marilyn A. Hemmert

## APPENDIX II

### QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire is part of a study to be made on the problem of grouping in the primary grades for the purpose of reading instruction. It is being made under the supervision of the Department of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts. It will be greatly appreciated, if you will fill out the questionnaire to the best of your ability. Your answers will be kept in the strictest of confidence. Please return the form in the envelope that is attached.

---

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What grade level do you teach?.....
2. How many children do you teach?.....

#### GROUPING (Tentative)

3. How do you arrive at your grouping for the purpose of reading instruction? (check one or more).....

Standard achievement test.....

Intelligence test.....

Previous records.....

Informal reading periods.....

Interest questionnaire.....

Commercial reading test.....

Anecdotal records.....

Physical status.....

Emotional status.....

Experience background.....

(write in others) .....

#### GROUP DIVISIONS

4. How many group divisions do you use?.....



5. Approximately what is the number in each group?

(consider number 1 as  
the superior group)

1.....  
2.....  
3.....  
4.....  
5.....  
6.....

FLEXIBILITY

6. Are your groups permanently fixed?  
(yes or no).....
7. If no to question number 6, approximately  
how many children have changed from one  
group to another?.....

NAMING THE GROUPS

8. What do you call your groups? (state the  
type: numbers, flowers, pupil's names etc.)..

TIME

9. If your groups read at certain times, which  
group usually reads first? (check one)
- 1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )
- no fixed time ( )
10. Approximately how long do you spend a day  
on reading? (consider just the actual time  
spent with the groups).....

PUBLIC RELATIONS

11. Which of the following reasons do you use,  
or would you use to explain grouping to  
parents? (check only one)
- "It is much easier to teach a small  
group than a large group".....
- "The reading authorities recommend  
it".....

"It is required by the system  
that I teach in.".....

"The children receive more individual  
attention.".....

"The children are able to progress  
according to their own abilities."..

"The results are much better than  
the old traditional one group  
method.".....

#### OTHER GROUPING

12. If you use grouping in other subjects other  
than reading, please check the subjects  
you use it in.

Arithmetic \_\_\_\_\_ Spelling \_\_\_\_\_

Social Studies \_\_\_\_\_

Science \_\_\_\_\_

(write in any  
others)

#### PERSONAL REASONS FOR GROUPING

13. What is your reason for using reading groups?  
(check one)

Research ( )

Effort to meet the individual needs of  
the pupils ( )

Administrative instructions ( )

Suggested by basic series ( )

Easier to teach reading ( )

#### DIFFICULTIES

14. The greatest difficulty in reading is found  
in which group? (answer from the standpoint  
of planning, guided reading, enrichment activi-  
ties, etc.) (check one)

Superior group( ) Average group( ) Inferior group( )



FUTURE GROUPING

16. If you had the choice, would you continue  
using reading groups? (yes or no).....

---

Would you please evaluate the following by checking below?

THE CHILD AND THE READING GROUP

PLEASE CHECK THE ONE YOU  
THINK IS MOST OUTSTANDING

PLEASE CHECK THE ONE YOU  
THINK IS MOST OUTSTANDING

Strengths

Children are able to progress  
according to own abilities ( )  
Children receive more individ-  
ual attention.....( )  
Children are able to use a  
greater variety of Materials( )

Weaknesses

The children feel labeled ( )  
It is against our democratic  
principles..... ( )  
Children feel a great sense  
of competition..... ( )  
Children are distracted by  
the different activities  
going on in the room..... ( )

---

THE TEACHER AND THE READING GROUP

PLEASE CHECK THE ONE YOU  
THINK IS MOST OUTSTANDING

PLEASE CHECK THE ONE YOU  
THINK IS MOST OUTSTANDING

Strengths

Easier to teach a small group  
than a large group.....( )  
Teacher can give more individ-  
ual attention to the child....( )  
Teacher can use differentiated  
books, seatwork, etc.....( )

Weaknesses

Working with groups is time  
consuming.....( )  
Difficult to divide into groups  
because ability range is too  
wide.....( )  
Difficult to plan seatwork  
that is meaningful in order  
to keep the class "busy"....( )  
Parents resent grouping.....( )

---

Thank you for your kind cooperation in filling out the questionnaire. If you would like a copy of the results of this survey, please sign your name and address below.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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BIBLIOGRAPHY

The author wishes to state that the works listed in this bibliography are not a complete list of the books covering this field; but they constitute the references considered most helpful to this study.

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Approved by:

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